

Mayor and Council Meeting  
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland  
January 14, 2003, 7:00 PM

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

Guests: (See attached roster)

Minutes:

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

Approval of December 10, 2002 minutes

Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2002 meeting. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Beautification Commission presentation

Mayor Eckman and Joe Harrison, Chairman of the Beautification Commission, thanked and presented certificates of appreciation to the people who worked to repair/replace and install the street decorations for Christmas, 2002, and to the people who won the Christmas Decorations Display contest in the residential and commercial categories. Bobbie Baldus thanked all who helped install the street decorations, noting the job couldn't get done without them. Mayor Eckman remarked that the people who helped restore the street decorations also do much more to help the Town. Mayor Eckman thanked Mr. Harrison and the other members of the Beautification Commission for putting up and decorating the tree in the lobby at the Town Hall.

People who worked to repair/replace and install the street decorations for Christmas, 2002:

Mr. and Mrs. Edward L. Sanders, Jr.	Peggy Stone
Jack Salyers	Mr. and Mrs. Carl R. Baldus, Jr.
Tom Higdon	John Mitchell, La Plata Lions Club
Mr. and Mrs. Victor B. Bowling, Jr.	Tom Roland, Charles County Dept. of Public Facilities
John Matthews	Mike Mudd, Charles County Dept. of Public Facilities
Walter Sollars	Joe Helwig, SMECO
Mr. and Mrs. Pete Barbour	Gene Stine, SMECO
Mr. and Mrs. Dale Howell	Pat Wathen, Verizon
Charlie Gardiner	Frank Wathen, Verizon

2002 Christmas Decorations Display contest winners:

<u>First Place Commercial</u> Dr. Arturo Monteiro Mon-Ros Medical Building 118 La Grange Avenue	Ralph and Ina Connatser 510 Scarlet Oak Road  Matthew and Rita DeLane 711 Silver Linden Drive	William and Mary Yeckley 115 Mallard Lane  Donald and Patty Simpson 110 Quail Court
<u>First Place Residential</u> Frederick and Debra Wyant 107 Quailwood Parkway	Jens and Nancy Knudsen 103 Westmorland Court  John and Cheryl Cavalier 1035 Suffolk Drive	Keith and Kerry Smith 608 Worcester Street  Larry and Linda Luttrell 417 Linden Lane
<u>Honorable Mentions</u> Roger and Darlene Hoffman 1358 Redwood Circle	Ralph and Gisele Straley 114 S. Wiltshire Court	Robert Gregory and Linda Deakins 100 Peachleaf Court
Donald and Robin Bladen 1346 Redwood Circle	Michael and Kimberly Hanks 128 E. Quail Lane	Truvella A. Carroll 101 Lelia Court
Glenn and Christine Frank 1326 Redwood Circle	Joseph and Judy Thomason 102 Oriole Lane	

Public Hearing

Mayor Eckman opened the hearing and advised that all five ordinances would be combined under one hearing. Mr. Miller noted for the record that the notice of the hearing on the five ordinances had been properly advertised in the December 27, 2002, edition of the Maryland Independent. It was also noted for the record that no one signed the speakers lists prepared for these ordinances.

Ordinance 02-18 Redistricting - For the purpose of repealing the existing ward boundary descriptions in the Town of La Plata and adopting new ward boundary descriptions; and matters generally relating to the description of wards in the Town of La Plata.

Mr. Miller provided a brief explanation of this ordinance, noting that after every census, the Town must redistrict the voting wards to provide that they are generally equal in population. Mr. Miller described the general location of the current wards and noted some of the proposed changes.

The Town Council had no questions or comments. Mayor Eckman asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak for or against the ordinance. No one wished to speak.

Ordinance 02-20 Design Review - For the purpose of defining certain terms; requiring review, comment and approval by the Design Review Board for certain projects in the C-B Central Business District before certain permits may be issued; providing that certain decisions of the Design Review Board may be appealed to the Board of Appeals by certain persons, and, thereafter, to the Circuit Court for Charles County; setting forth the powers, duties, purpose, jurisdiction, appeal process and enforcement

provisions granted to the Design Review Board; providing that certain provisions of this Ordinance do not become effective until the Town has adopted Community Design Guidelines; and matters generally relating to the Design Review Board.

Mr. Miller provided a brief summary of the ordinance and advised that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on this ordinance on January 7, 2003, and passed a motion by majority vote to recommend that the Town Council approve the ordinance.

The Town Council had no questions or comments. Mayor Eckman asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak for or against the ordinance. No one wished to speak.

Ordinance 02-21 Community Design Guidelines - For the purpose of adopting Community Design Guidelines for the Town of La Plata; and all matters relating to said guidelines.

Mr. Miller provided a brief summary of the ordinance.

The Town Council had no questions or comments. Mayor Eckman asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak for or against the ordinance. No one wished to speak.

Ordinance 02-22 Setback-Urban Highway Characteristics - For the purpose of establishing and defining the required setback of structures in a particular area of the Commercial Highway District zone, where the properties in that district are abutting properties in the Central Business District zone; and all matters generally relating to said setback requirements.

Mr. Miller provided a brief summary of the ordinance and advised that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on this ordinance on January 7, 2003, and passed a motion by unanimous vote to recommend that the Town Council approve the ordinance.

The Town Council had no questions or comments. Mayor Eckman asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak for or against the ordinance. No one wished to speak.

Ordinance 02-23 Dwellings in C-B Central Business District - For the purpose of allowing dwellings in the C-B Central Business District, subject to certain conditions; specifying the conditions under which those dwellings may be allowed in the Central Business District zone; and all matters generally relating to said setback requirements.

Mr. Miller provided a brief summary of the ordinance and advised that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on this ordinance on January 7, 2003, and passed a motion by unanimous vote to recommend that the Town Council approve the ordinance.

The Town Council had no questions or comments. Mayor Eckman asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak for or against the ordinance. No one wished to speak.

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

### Legislation

Mayor Eckman explained that after the public hearing, if there has been testimony for or against an ordinance, it has been the practice of the Council to defer action. However, since there was no testimony for or against at this hearing, and none at the hearing held by the Planning Commission, Mayor Eckman asked the Council if they wanted to adopt, reject or delay the ordinances at this meeting.

Councilman Winkler made a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-18 Redistricting. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Ambrogio made a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-20 Design Review. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion. In discussion before the vote on this motion, Mayor Eckman acknowledged and read Amendment No. 1 requested by the Design Review Board. Councilman Ambrogio made a motion to adopt Amendment No. 1 to Ordinance 02-20. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion to adopt the amendment and the motion passed by unanimous vote. The vote on the motion to adopt Ordinance 02-20 with the amendment passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Fritz made a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-21 Community Design Guidelines. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion. In discussion before the vote on this motion, Mayor Eckman acknowledged and read Amendments No. 1 and No. 2 requested by the Design Review Board. Councilman Winkler made a motion to adopt Amendments No. 1 and No. 2 to Ordinance 02-21. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion to adopt the amendments and the motion passed by unanimous vote. The vote on the motion to adopt Ordinance 02-21 with the amendments passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Ambrogio made a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-22 Setback-Urban Highway Characteristics. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Fritz made a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-23 Dwellings in C-B Central Business District. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

### Unfinished Business

#### Council Reports

Councilman Fritz reported on topics discussed at the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting held January 8: (1) Town Manager to be asked to direct or hire out a maintenance team to visit all Town parks in early spring, conduct an inspection of equipment to assure safety and maintenance, rake and loosen mulch, and do general clean-up. (2) Working with the Garden Club and Historical Society to develop proposals for an RFP to increase the beauty and create a small-setting park by the Train Station. (3) Recommending to the Historical Society that they consider fees similar to Wills Park fees for Town residents who may wish to use the Train Station. (4) Town Manager to be asked to insure that all Town tennis and basketball courts get recoated in early spring or with the first paving contract that the Town has.

- (5) Work continues on the total development plan of the Tilghman Lake area as a natural preserve to be used by the schools for the education of children. The Town has done a good job of cleaning up debris.
- (6) Town Manager to be asked to include a specific aerial photo of the Tilghman Lake park area in the upcoming aerial photo project.

Councilman Ambrogio reported that the Beautification Commission did not have a regular meeting in December, but spent time on the various Christmas functions. Joe Harrison advised that the Commission would be taking down the Christmas decorations at Town Hall on January 15.

Councilman Winkler congratulated Councilman and Mrs. Fritz for receiving a commendation for the work they're doing with the cancer program. Councilman Winkler reported on several topics: (1) The Charles County Disaster Relief Fund committee met yesterday. They are receiving 10 to 15 applications every few weeks. They will be accepting applications until April 28. Money left in the fund after that date may be used to give more relief to previous applicants whose requests were in excess of the maximum \$1000 at the start of the relief fund program. (2) Development activity in Ward 1 includes 6 lots at the entrance to Quailwood and 20 acres behind ANS purchased and to be developed by John Sites. (3) Historic District Commission meets this week. Those interested in having their property designated as an historical site should call Town Hall to get an application.

Mayor Eckman reported on several topics: (1) The Streetscape task force made a presentation to the County Commissioners today. Channel 4 reported on it. The County Commissioners asked many good questions and seemed comfortable with the answers. As a matter of record, Mayor Eckman noted that there is a lot of misunderstanding about the streetscape project. He noted that the concept plan has been adopted, but it is only a concept plan, and that there will be many changes made to the plan as it is implemented. Mayor Eckman further noted that quite a bit of the streetscape changes will take place on private property, such as planting trees, and if the property owners don't want the streetscape changes done or the trees planted on their property, it will not be done on their property. Mayor Eckman received confirmation from Paula Winkler, a member of the streetscape task force, that the task force is not yet ready to present the final report at the next Town Council meeting. (2) Engineering has been completed on the sewer reliever from Centennial Street down to the wastewater plant and has been submitted to Maryland Department of the Environment and to State Highway Administration for approval, after which it will be put out to bid and work on it may be underway within a few months. (3) Design guidelines adopted at this meeting are only for the Central Business District. The process has begun to adapt those guidelines to the Commercial Highway District, a draft of which may be ready in February.

## New Business

### Appointment of Kent Avenue Task Force Members

Mayor Eckman advised that the Council is not yet ready to make these appointments and invited Councilman Ambrogio to report on this task force. Councilman Ambrogio reported on the progress of the Kent Avenue Corridor Revitalization Committee, who will be working to improve the residential neighborhoods there. He noted that they may be calling on other communities or people for their expertise in different areas needed to help this area. Councilman Ambrogio noted that he is the chairman of the task force and that other members include Councilman Winkler, and representatives from the La Plata Police Department and Charles County Sheriff's Office, the Town Manager, the Town's Director of Inspections,

representatives from Kent Square, Heritage Place Apartments (formerly Olde Colony Apartments), and the Caroline Drive community (Meadows), and someone from the real estate industry. Councilman Ambrogio asked for everyone's support and prayers for this venture.

#### Design Review Board funding recommendations

Mayor Eckman explained that after the tornado, the governor recognized that we had an opportunity to implement some of the principles that were contained in the Town's Vision Plan and to institute some of the design changes we wanted. He made available to the Town a significant amount of grant money through the Department of Business and Economic Development and a portion of that money was allocated to what the Town called incentive financing. If a property owner demonstrates to the Design Review Board that they are going to build back something more in line with the Vision Plan than was present before the tornado, and if that build-back involves some relocation and changing of the building and the site plan, the Design Review Board can recommend a certain amount of money as incentive financing be given to help defer the added costs involved in meeting the vision plan.

Two funding recommendations were forwarded by the Design Review Board to the Mayor and Council:

Joe Norris  
109 La Grange Avenue  
\$20,000

Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the payment of \$20,000. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Carl Baldus  
101 Charles Street  
\$25,000

Councilman Winkler made a motion to approve the payment of \$25,000. In discussion before the vote, Councilman Ambrogio asked if the rebuilding affected the pad location. Mayor Eckman advised that the building was being relocated and that the bank's drive-through window was being moved from the Charles Street side to the other side of the building. The Design Review Board requested the relocation of the drive-through so that instead of seeing a line of cars waiting to go through the drive-through, you'll see landscaping. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

#### Appointment of Design Review Board Vice Chairman

Mayor Eckman explained that when the five-member Design Review Board was first established they did not have a Vice Chairman. The five members are Cheryl McGuire (chairman), Rick Baldus, Ron Litten, David Jenkins and Charles McPherson. Mayor Eckman recommended the appointment of Rick Baldus as the vice chairman and asked for a motion to approve the appointment. Councilman Winkler made a motion to approve the appointment of Rick Baldus as vice chair. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion. Mayor Eckman praised the work and outstanding attendance at meetings of the members of the Design Review Board, and thanked them for the work they're doing. The motion passed by unanimous

vote.

### Public Forum

Dick Doult, a resident of Hickory Ridge, expressed appreciation for Councilman Fritz's representation of his community and noted that they knew Councilman Hale would do a good job for them.

Mayor Eckman noted that Councilman Hale was in Florida on work-related business.

Regina Clark, a resident of the Meadows, expressed appreciation to Chief Gittings, Councilman Ambrogio, Mr. Miller, the Town Council, and Officer Wyant for all that has been accomplished in her neighborhood, including the increased police patrols. She advised that spring events include a clean-up at the park and an Easter egg hunt. Mrs. Clark also thanked Mayor Eckman for encouraging her to continue.

Councilman Winkler asked Bobbie Baldus where the star would be located next year. Mrs. Baldus said she would like it to return to its original location and noted she has heard from many people who feel the same way. Mrs. Baldus advised they received many compliments on the new snowflakes that were on the utility poles and noted that February is when they may be purchased at discount. She would like to put more snowflakes along Port Tobacco Road down to ANS. Mayor Eckman advised it has not yet been fully resolved if the tower will be put back in its original location, and that after the determination has been made that it will not be put back in that location, the Town will look at a number of other alternatives. It was agreed that Mrs. Baldus will contact the Town in February regarding purchasing more snowflakes.

Jack Salyers asked the Town to consider installing a higher street light at the intersection of Quailwood Parkway and Rt. 6. That intersection is very dark and poses a safety hazard. Mike Hanks, President of the Quailwood Homeowners Association, advised that he had spoken to Mr. Miller and that SMECO has been at the site. Mr. Miller advised that the issue SMECO looked at was improving the lighting on the entrance sign and it was determined that they couldn't pull electricity from the existing lamp post for the purpose. Mr. Miller noted he believed Mr. Salyers is talking about putting a cobra-style light off one of the telephone poles.

Joe Harrison asked for authorization to begin construction on a new star. He would like to work with Indian Head Ironworks for the structure and take it to a sign company to install the neon tubing, for later installation on a pole or tower. Mayor Eckman advised it may be better to hold off on construction of the star until a decision is made about mounting the structure on a pole or a tower.

Jake Mitchell expressed appreciation to all involved in the Christmas decorations, especially after the tornado.

Mayor Eckman praised SMECO for all they have done for La Plata, noting they have outdone themselves in everything they've done for La Plata since the tornado, especially restoring power to wells and homes and the rewiring that was needed.

Paula Winkler, Washington Avenue, asked if the weight restriction was still in effect on Washington Avenue and questioned the influx of heavy trucks on this street during the hours of 1:00 AM to 9:30 or 10:00 AM. Mayor Eckman asked Chief Gittings to check on this. Chief Gittings responded that they have increased enforcement in that area due to receiving information about increased truck traffic and will continue to enforce the weight restriction.

There being no further business, Councilman Winkler made a motion to adjourn at 8:05 PM. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier  
Town Clerk