

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Work Session
March 15, 2005, 4:00 PM

Present: Councilman Roy G. Hale, mayor pro tem, Councilman Wayne Winkler, Councilman C. Keith Back, Councilman Gene Ambrogio; Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager; Patricia L. Bembe, Assistant Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk

Town Staff: Joseph W. Norris, Town Treasurer

Minutes:

Due to the absence of Mayor Eckman, Councilman Hale acted as mayor pro tem. Councilman Hale called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Matters of Council Discussion

Elected Body Salaries

Description: The Mayor and Council cannot raise their salaries while in office. However, the Mayor and Council can raise the salaries for their successors. If salaries are to be adjusted, it must be done before the Primary Election.

It was noted that the salaries were last raised in 2001: effective in 2001 for Mayor and Council Wards III and IV Council, and effective in 2003 for Council Wards I and II.

Council Consensus: The Council agreed to have Mr. Miller check with other municipalities to obtain comparison salary information, and to email the information to the Town Council.

Parks for Apartments

Description: Currently, the Town requires parks to be planned as part of the subdivision process. If a subdivision does not have a park, then a fee-in-lieu is paid by the builder of the house at time of building permit. With the surge in apartment construction, there is no mechanism to have park construction as part of the approval process unless subdivision is involved.

Council Consensus: The Council agreed to proceed with providing a requirement that apartments be subject to the provisions specified in §173-11A Dedication and reservation of parkland.

Old Town Sewer District

Description: On March 1st, the Council agreed to reexamine the old town sewer district concept.

Council Consensus: The Council agreed that the “old town sewer district” businesses for which the original intent was to exempt from paying major facilities fees have rebuilt, and that new construction within the “old town sewer district” should have to pay major facilities fees. They also agreed to examine exempting restaurants in the “old town sewer district” from having to pay major facilities fees, and to consider devising a program of incentives meant to attract restaurants and certain types of other businesses to the district.

Tax Rate FY 06

Description: The tax rate must be established as soon as possible. The Council needs to begin discussion on this topic.

Council Consensus: The Council agreed to keep the tax rate the same, and to advertise for a public hearing on the constant yield tax rate.

Comcast Cable Franchise

Description: The pending Cable Franchise will be discussed.

Council Consensus: The Council agreed they are satisfied with the six items listed by Ms. Bembe which are being negotiated with Comcast (internet provided to our facilities at no charge, expanded basic cable provided to our facilities, the library and fire stations at no charge; cable provided to public and private schools within the corporate limits of the Town at no charge, including installation; expand the definition of “gross revenue” – what our 5% fee is based upon – to include at least what the County is receiving; scrolling program menu; and term of contract to be 6 years). They further agreed to include Wills Park in the list of Town facilities and to require Comcast to notify the public regarding the agreement.

Matters of Information

Status of well project Mr. Miller advised that A. C. Schultes has been asked to test the two minor wells for the possibility of upgrading them to 400 GPM versus drilling a new major well.

Status of water tank project: In response to Councilman Winkler’s request for an update, Mr. Miller advised that the Town may need to ask Congressman Hoyer to intervene with EPA if it turns out we will lose the \$92,000 insurance money, which will be known by Thursday. If that happens, the Town will need to split out the contract to get started.

Status of sewer re-route project: Mr. Miller advised that the project has been released by MDE/EPA and work will begin this summer.

Status of Police Station project: Mr. Miller advised that a new bid will be put out and will incorporate the items discussed by the Town Council in January. He noted that the roof is still an issue and will be subject of alternate with the core bid.

Potholes: Councilman Hale asked that Public Works identify and repair potholes caused by the severe winter weather.

Status of I & I Project: Mr. Miller advised that this is not progressing as quickly as the Town would prefer, but noted the company is working on it.

Councilman Winkler advised he had spoken to Charles County Commission President Wayne Cooper regarding the status of Talbot Street and the Hermitage property issue, about which Councilman Winkler was told by a County employee that the County and Hermitage property owner had reached an agreement. Commission President Cooper advised that is not the case.

Burkey Boggs provided a brief update on the Carousel Museum project.

In response to Councilman Ambrogio's request for an update on the Grasso annexation agreement, Mr. Miller advised he would encourage the Town Attorney to provide a draft prior to the public hearing scheduled for the March 22 Town Council meeting, and noted he would email it to the Town Council.

Lois Page, GP Homes, asked the Town to have the Town Attorney prepare letters to the owners of off-site Route 6 properties needed for Heritage Green Parkway.

There being no other discussion, Councilman Winkler made a motion to adjourn at 5:45 PM. Councilman Back seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Submitted by:

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk