

TOWN NOTES

News from La Plata Town Hall



MAYOR'S CORNER

The Holiday Season provided an opportunity for most families to come together in the true meaning of this special time of year. The festive decorations in the Town and in the residential communities were excellent and we truly appreciate the effort of all those who participated in making La Plata a home for the Holidays.

Entering a new year, it is a safe statement to say that La Plata's star is rising as we continue to work on the broad vision established many years ago. A lot has been accomplished, but we fully realize that the work is far from complete and there are still many important issues facing our community.

If the Mayans are correct, we do not have much time to proceed in our work. Their calendar has the world ending this year, but on the assumption the Mayans were a few millenniums off on their calculations, we will proceed ahead. And a good way to do that is to briefly recap some of our accomplishments in the past year.

Facing a consent decree for sanitary sewer overflows, La Plata leveraged \$6 million in stimulus loans to construct a new pump station across from Willow Lane to eliminate two sanitary sewer overflows that had plagued La Plata for years. The project, completed last spring, is working extremely well.

Work continues at our Waste Water Treatment Plant to upgrade the plant to the higher standards of Enhanced Nutrient Reduction. This includes the addition of a new module with many additional

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Tornado 10 Year Anniversary



Saturday, April 28, 2012 will mark the 10 year anniversary of the day the tornado hit the Town of La Plata.

The images and events still seem so fresh in our minds. Yet when we look around the Town as it is today, it's hard to believe that it has only been ten years. The recovery and rebuilding that followed that tragic event have wiped out most evidence of the devastation and left us with a beautiful Town and a Closer and Stronger Community.

The Town is planning many activities on April 28 as part of Celebrate La Plata. The Town is partnering with various organizations, businesses, and residents to offer a wide variety of activities and remembrances. If you or your organization are planning activities related to the ten year anniversary, please contact Michelle Miner at Town Hall to see about collaboration opportunity. Just call (301) 934-8421 or post something on the La Plata Tornado Facebook page.

Some of the activities planned include a "Memory Lane" exhibit. Owners of commercial or residential property that suffered damage from the tornado are encouraged to participate with Memory Lane signs on their property, which will be displayed throughout the month of April. A sample of what the uniform signs will look like can be seen in front of Martin's Service Station on Charles Street. To participate and for more information visit the Town's website www.townoflaplata.org.

April 28, 2002 — April 28, 2012
La Plata TEN YEARS STRONGER

Martin's Service Station; 309 Charles Street



April 28, 2002

Martin's is a family owned and operated business that has served the Town of La Plata and surrounding areas since 1922. We are third generation, and to see the business that your father and grandfather worked so hard to build destroyed by a tornado is devastating.

Our building was totally destroyed and had to be rebuilt from the ground up. We were fourteen months rebuilding, and during that time we were fortunate enough that our loyal customers stood by us, and we worked out of our home shop.

Today

We had considered rebuilding before the storm, but it was not feasible for us. Our old building did not meet some of the new codes and was not handicapped accessible in some areas. Once we got over the initial shock and got through the insurance process, it was exciting to plan and construct a new, more modern, and larger building. We were able to double our size and add a gift shop in the front.



The support we received from the community was greatly appreciated, and it was that support, our determination to rebuild and the goodness of God that gave us the strength to get through those 14 months of rebuilding. I would like to think that we are stronger because of this experience.



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COVER YOUR TRASH

The La Plata Town Code requires that refuse containers be secured with tight covers and are waterproof as well as rodent and insect proof. The provision of containers to single family residential customers went a long way to helping residents comply with that provision of code. There are a few reasons why this code is important. The first reason is likely obvious to most people, however the second reason may surprise you.

First, the Town's refuse collection is a service that helps maintain public health. By storing your refuse in a secure container with a lid, you are reducing the ability of insects and vermin from getting into your trash. Refuse is a source of food that attracts vermin into our communities which may result in the spread of certain diseases, pests, or simply trash strewn across the ground by a raccoon, possum, or rat, that is then blown or washed through the community.

The second reason is to reduce the weight of your trash. The Town of La Plata hauls its trash to the Charles County Landfill where the truck is weighed. The Town is charged based on the weight of the trash. The heavier the trash, the more it costs to provide this sanitation service.

When you leave your trash container uncovered, every time it rains, your debris is getting wet. Every gallon of water weighs about 8.35 pounds. So it only takes 239 gallons of water to be soaked up in the community's trash to add one ton of weight. This adds up very quickly with 3,000 sanitation customers. Every bit of reduction in weight helps.

Please, close the lid on your trash container to keep unwanted water weight out. Close the lid on your neighborhood or business dumpster to keep out precipitation and vermin. Recycle everything that you can. If you generate more refuse than



can fit into the 95 gallon container, please get an additional container. It is only \$50 and Public Works will deliver it to your home. Just call (301) 934-8421.

MAKING LA PLATA MORE EFFICIENT

With resources strained by challenges in the economy, it is vital that the Town explore ways to make its operations more efficient to save money, time, and add value to the services provided. Town staff is charged with finding new ways to improve services, and the Town regularly invests in technology or implements process changes to drive efficiencies.

Energy Efficient Heating

La Plata Public Works moved to the former Alban Tractor facility on 301 in late 2008. Several modifications were made so that the facility could be reused to meet the needs of the Town's Public Works operations. One of the items that needed fixing was the heating in the repair bays of the garage. The Town applied for a Maryland Energy Administration Grant and was awarded a \$50,000 grant to put in a new energy efficient heating system. The funds were part of the stimulus package passed by the federal government, and are able to be put to use benefitting the Town locally. Work on the installation of the new system is expected to be complete in early February.

DANIEL J. MEARS, TOWN MANAGER GRADUATES FROM LEADERSHIP MARYLAND CLASS OF 2011

Daniel J. Mears, Town Manager, recently completed an eight-month long leadership development program sponsored by Leadership Maryland.

Leadership Maryland, celebrating its 19th graduating class, honored Daniel, along with fifty-one statewide classmates at a black-tie reception and banquet held December 6, 2011 at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in Baltimore.

Leadership Maryland, an independent, educational leadership development organization, informs top level executives from the public and private sectors about the critical issues, challenges and opportunities facing the State of Maryland, and its regions. After participating in a broad range of experiences, these statewide leaders are prepared to address these issues and serve as important participants in the unified effort to shape Maryland's future.

Code Corner – Building Numbers

78-5 - Duty of owner or occupant to affix numbers.

Owners, agents, lessors, or occupants of existing principal buildings are required to affix the property numbers in conformance with the provisions of chapter 78 of the Town Code.

All numbers shall be of metal or other durable material, shall not be less than three (3) inches high and in proportionate width, shall be of colors contrasting with the background on which they are placed, and shall be placed on the property or building in such a position as to be plainly and easily read from the street. Commercial properties located in shopping centers shall be numbered at all entrances from parking areas.

\$500 Beautification Grant

The Beautification Commission implemented the *Beautification Commission Grant Program* to encourage residents, Home Owners Associations, school projects, scout groups, civic organizations, businesses, and other community members to help “beautify” our town. If you have a project idea that will improve the appearance, cleanliness or reduce current maintenance needs please return the *Beautification Grant Application* by the May 7, 2012 deadline to Danielle Mandley via fax (301) 934-5724 or email dmandley@townofaplata.org, applications may also be delivered by mail

or in person to 305 Queen Anne Street. Please call (301) 934-8421 if you have any questions.



CONSERVATION MINI-GRANTS

Help make La Plata a better place for you and the environment. In order to help turn some of your ideas on helping our environment into reality, offers Conservation Mini-Grants. Several grants of up to \$500 for projects that positively benefits La Plata environmentally are available for the May 7, application deadline.

Find a way to inspire action, educate the community, or directly benefit our environment. This is a great outlet for Home Owner Associations, school projects, scout groups, civic organizations, individuals,

businesses, and other community members to do something that benefits you, the Town, and the environment. Grant applications are available for download from the Town's website, or you may get them directly from Town Manager Daniel Mears at (301) 934-8421 or dmears@townofaplata.org. Grant applications will be reviewed by La Plata's Green Building Committee and successful projects will receive up to \$500 to help implement the idea. Thank you for your interest in helping our community and the Town can help you make that happen.

Town Hall Closed

The Town Hall will be closed on the following days:

Presidents' Day **Monday, February 20, 2012**

If you have a **water or sewer emergency** after hours, call (301)934-8421 and follow the instructions given to report your emergency. The automated response system will alert the appropriate department to respond to you.

TOWN OF LA PLATA OFFICIALS

Mayor: Roy G. Hale

Council:

Wayne Winkler Ward 1
C. Keith Back Ward 2
Paddy Mudd Ward 3
Joseph W. Norris Ward 4

Town Manager:

Daniel J. Mears

Treasurer: Robert W. Oliphant

Assistant Town Manager:

Michelle D. Miner

Town Clerk: Danielle Mandley

Project Manager: Steven F. Schroeder

Police Chief: Cassin B. Gittings

Director of Planning and Community

Development: David M. Jenkins

Director of Operations: Robert F. Stahl, Jr.

Director of Public Works:

Jeffrey S. Garner

Senior Planner: Theresa C. Dent

Manager of Inspections: James Q. Yates

305 Queen Anne Street,
La Plata, Maryland 20646

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Telephone: 301-934-8421 / 301-870-3377

La Plata Police Department: 301-934-1500

Email: mminer@townofaplata.org

Website: www.townofaplata.org

MAYOR'S CORNER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

improvements. While our capacity will remain at 1.5 million gallons per day the efficiency of the plant will be improved to comply with new State requirements.

La Plata received a grant for \$50,000 for energy efficiency that will be used to upgrade the heating system in the public works facility. In addition, \$95,000 received from the Federal government for transportation purposes was used to upgrade 145 curb cuts throughout the Town in order to bring our sidewalks and other entrances in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

La Plata will use a grant of \$500,000 together with an equal amount of matching funds to replace all water meters with a meter that will provide the latest in remote read capability. The first meters were installed in business locations in December and installation at individual residents commenced in January.

The Town finished a conversion to automated tippers on all trash trucks and provided containers to all its residential customers in order to promote efficiency. Following a short period of adjustment for residential users, this program has worked very well.

In a difficult economy, La Plata continues to benefit from new commercial construction and the redevelopment of existing business locations including the recent sale of the Exxon Station at the corner of Charles Street and Route 301 to Southern Maryland Oil. This station will soon reopen, retaining the Exxon brand.

By the time you receive this Newsletter, you will have received your current property assessment for tax purposes. Property values have decreased substantially in La Plata as well as throughout the entire region. A lower tax base will require the Town to find ways to continue providing a high level of services with a lower amount of revenues. A difficult situation at best, but one the Town Council will address in the budget reviews that will be held over the next several months.

As we move into a new year we will not forget our legacy or the true purpose of all our endeavors: making this Town a better place for all our residents and our many visitors.

As your Mayor, I will always be interested in your comments, both favorable and critical. You may reach me at Town Hall (301) 934-8421 or at home (301) 934-4850.

Conservation Corner – Storm Water



2011 was not a typical year when it comes to rain. Things were a little wetter than usual, particularly in late August and Early September. Each year La Plata typically gets 40 inches of rain. That translates to over 4,830,000,000 gallons of water which washes over our community every year. The rain helps to nourish our plants, keep our soils moist, inhibit wind erosion, and clean the air.

All of this water also washes dirt, wastes, garbage, pesticides, fertilizers, petroleum, and other contaminants from our properties and roadways. The contaminants flow over ground and through existing storm water pipes into our creeks and streams. The water continues into the Potomac River and eventually the Chesapeake Bay, along with the grit and wastes that we leave on the ground.

In 2007, Maryland enacted the Storm Water Management Act of 2007 which compels changes to how communities across the State must address storm water issues. The Act required that Environmental Site Design be used on new construction, through the use of nonstructural best management practices and other better site design techniques, be implemented to the maximum extent practicable. In 2009 La Plata assessed a small storm water fee to assess La Plata's storm water infrastructure, and map where it is throughout the community. In May of 2010 La Plata adopted a new storm water ordinance for development review, approval processes, and inspection of storm water control facilities. In 2010 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency set limits on the amount of nutrients and sediments that can enter the Chesapeake Bay known as Total

Maximum Daily Loads. Maryland communities now must address the second phase of a mandated Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). This establishes specific nutrient reduction goals for storm water.

This spring the Town Council will be evaluating options for how it must comply with additional requirements of the 2007 Act, and the WIP II. The 2007 State regulation and the WIP provide a significant new burden on the Town of La Plata and other local governments across the State, however the goal is to improve the quality of the waters of Maryland, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

You can help water quality by ensuring your trash and recyclables do not blow out of their containers by using trash cans with lids that are securely fastened, or placing heavy items on top of lighter material in your recycling container. If there is trash on the ground, either in your neighborhood or where you walk, take a moment to pick it up. Many walkers in La Plata bring a small bag with them to pick up items as they walk. Debris blows throughout our community and eventually ends up in lower areas where streams carry it further out. This pollutes our waterways.

Most importantly, do not litter. Cigarette butts, food wrappers, beverage containers, and plastic bags are among the most common items seen on the ground. These come from members of our community who may not think about where the trash will end up. It not only makes our community unsightly, but it has an environmental impact as well. Use a trash receptacle in your neighborhood, carry your trash to home or work and dispose of it there, do not throw anything out of your car window or as you walk through the community. Respect for your neighbors and community leads to respect of the larger environment.

Thank you for your help in keeping pollutants out of the storm water system and our environment.

LA PLATA TOWN SERVICES

Special Trash Pickup

Bulk items are picked up the first Monday of each month, or the following Monday if the first one is a holiday. Large amounts of loose material (such as brush) should be bundled or bagged in such a manner that the weight is less than 50 lbs. The Town reserves the right not to pick up items too heavy to safely handle. General construction cleanup and hazardous materials are not eligible. Items must be at curbside by 7:30 a.m. on pickup day. Call Town Hall before pickup day to be placed on the list. Billing for special trash pickup is included on your quarterly utility bill.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection



CHARLES COUNTY
HOUSEHOLD
HAZARDOUS WASTE
COLLECTION

Collection is a contracted service and items can-

not be accepted when the contractor is not on site. Household hazardous waste collection will resume in April on the first Saturday of each month, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. in the parking lot of the Department of Public Works building, located at 10430 Audie Lane, off of Radio Station Road in La Plata. Household hazardous waste collec-

tion is a contracted service and items can-

not be accepted when the contractor is not on site. Items accepted free of charge include pesticides, herbicides, fertilizer, gasoline, motor oil, antifreeze, paint, cleaning supplies, pool chemicals, batteries, expired prescription drugs, and other poisons that are around your house. Please keep the materials in their original containers whenever possible, and bring them to the collection site in cardboard boxes to ease unloading.

For more information, call the Charles County Department of Public Facilities, Environmental Resources Division at (301) 932-3599.

Trash Collection Schedule Adjustment

If your regular trash collection day is:
Monday, February 20, 2012

Trash will be picked up on:
Tuesday, February 21, 2012

MARCH 2012

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

1

2

3

Yard Waste Pick Up

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Yard Waste Pick Up

Special pick-up; call by 4:00 p.m. on 3/2 to be put on list

Planning Commission meeting; 7:00 p.m.

Design Review Board Meeting; 9:00 a.m.
Crime Watch Council Meeting; 7:30 p.m.

Yard Waste Pick Up

11

12

13

14

15

16

17



Daylight Savings

Yard Waste Pick Up

Mayor and Council Work Session; 7:00 p.m.

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting; 5:00 p.m.

Yard Waste Pick Up

St. Patrick's Day



18

19

20

21

22

23

24

Yard Waste Pick Up
Beautification Commission Meeting; 4:00 p.m.

Mayor and Council Work Session; 7:00 p.m.
Spring Begins


Design Review Board Meeting; 9:00 a.m.

Yard Waste Pick Up

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

Yard Waste Pick Up

Mayor and Council Regular Meetings; 7:00 p.m.

Commission Thank you reception; 6:00 p.m.

Yard Waste Pick Up

Tornado 10 Year Anniversary

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The annual Civista run/walk for wellness will take place April 28 beginning at 8:30 a.m. For information or online registration please visit their website at www.civista.org/foundation.htm

Archbishop Neale School will be holding a fund raiser dinner on Friday,

April 27 at the Waldorf Jaycees. For more information contact ANS at (301) 934-9595.

The Southern Maryland Blue Crabs will be hosting "Celebrate La Plata Weekend" starting on April 27-29 at Regency Furniture Stadium. They will be offering ticket specials for all La Plata residents. For more information visit their website at www.somdbluecrabs.com.

The La Plata Garden Club will be holding a Memorial Service at the "Star Memorial garden" located under the star and behind the old firehouse on Calvert Street beginning at 11:30 a.m.

MEDSTAR will have a helicopter on

display at the Town Hall. They were just one of many organizations that provided emergency response.

The La Plata Police Department will hold an Open House during Celebrate La Plata on the 28th.

In addition to the many activities on the grounds of the Town Hall throughout the day there will be a concert beginning at 7:00 p.m. featuring the US Navy Band "Cruisers".

For more information about any of the Town's plans for April or if your organization is planning an anniversary activity, contact Michelle Miner at (301) 934-8421 or mminer@townoflaplata.org.



Town of La Plata Utility Payment Automatic ACH Withdrawal Authorization Instructions & Terms

INSTRUCTIONS:

Fill out the accompanying form. Please print or type all of the information.

The person(s) completing the form must return the completed form to the Finance Office in the Town Hall in person and must provide some form of picture identification to the Town staff at the time they submit it, documenting that they are the person(s) who signed the form.

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

The automatic withdrawal will become effective for the first billing cycle that ends after the authorization has been submitted.

Customers electing to pay their bills via this process will still be mailed bills each quarter and will have ample time from the date the bills are mailed until the due date to contact the Town re: any issues they may have with their bill and get them resolved before their account is drafted.

It is the customers responsibility to ensure there are adequate funds in their account to cover their payment at the time that the withdrawal is scheduled to occur and will be subject to fees and interest if there is not.

It is the customers responsibility to make sure their payment is withdrawn from their account prior to the due date and may be subject to late fees and interest if it is not.

If a customer desires to change or terminate this service once it has been initiated, they must communicate their desires to the Town in writing, a minimum of two weeks before the end of the calendar quarter.



Town of La Plata
Utility Payment
Automatic ACH Withdrawal Authorization
Form

Utility Account Information [as it appears on your utility bill(s)]

If you want to pay the bills for multiple utility accounts from a single bank account, please provide the following information for each of the utility accounts - attach additional pages as needed.

Name(s) on account _____

Account Number _____

Service Address _____

Bank Account Information

Name(s) on Account _____

Account Type Checking Savings

If you have chosen to use a checking account, please attach a voided copy of a check to this form

Bank Name _____

Bank Routing Number _____
9 digit number

Bank Account Number _____

I (we) hereby certify that I (we) have the rights and authority to authorize the ACH withdrawal of funds from the above referenced account and hereby authorize the Town of La Plata to automatically withdraw the amount I (we) owe for Town utilities, from this account, each quarter, two to five days before the due date specified on the quarterly bill.

Signature(s) _____

Date _____

All information provided will be used solely for the purpose of drafting Town utility payments from customer accounts. None of the information provided shall be made available to or shared with other entities, except as required to facilitate the drafting of the payments.

For Office Use Only

Identity Verification

ID Type _____

ID Number _____

Initials _____ Date _____

System Input

Initials _____ Date _____

WATER METER REPLACEMENT

After several months of preliminary work, the Town has begun installation of the new Automated Water Meter system. This system will read each water meter remotely and the Town will be able to access the information without sending anyone to the customer location. Each customer will also be able to access their own account information and current meter reading individually through the internet in the coming months.

The equipment needed to collect the information from each of the meters was installed throughout the Town during January. Commercial meter replacement began in December and residential meters in January.

Your help is appreciated to access your meter. A technician will need access to each every existing meters to install the new equipment and do the initial setup. Please call (301) 542-5361 to make an appointment with the contractor to do the installation at your convenience. The contractor will also be following up with every utility customer. All of the installations should be completed by May 1, 2012.

You will notice the contractors from Mueller Systems in your neighborhood. Their vehicles will have the signs pictured on the side. While the installation is in progress, please continue to call the Town at (301) 934-8421 to report any problems with the quality or quantity of water you are receiving.



WiFi ONE YEAR LATER



This month marks one year since WiFi was freely accessible across downtown. The Town of La Plata and the Charles County Public Library partnered to bring you the free, public WiFi network. Since the

test system began in September 2010, and the expansion across downtown in February 2011, over 1,600 people have utilized this information network. If you have yet to try it, just bring your mobile device to downtown La Plata to discover how you can connect to the Internet in between shopping, dining, and taking care of a variety of service needs. The network is named Town

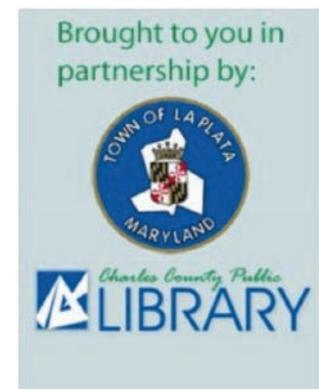
of La Plata. Simply select that network from the list of available networks, and click through the splash page. Once you click through the splash page, you can access the Internet just like you would be able to at a terminal in the Library.

The WiFi network today covers much of downtown La Plata. Service generally extends from Centennial Street at 301 east to the Charles County Public Library's La Plata Branch on Garrett Avenue. It also covers from Town Hall on the south to the Farmer's Market on Washington Avenue. Coverage is not 100% in this area, and is limited by the power of the antenna in your device and its ability to 'see' one of the thirteen access points currently deployed.

Access points are located on the rooftops of these community partner buildings: Civista, Port Tobacco Players, Facchina, PNC Bank, South Centennial Office Condominium Association, Candy Clark Boutique, and Ed

Kelly. In addition to their buildings, there are access points on the Library's La Plata Branch, La Plata Town Hall, and the old fire station under the Star Memorial.

If you are a downtown La Plata property owner who would like to discuss hosting a site to help enhance coverage, please contact Daniel Mears at (301) 934-8421.



BREAKFAST WITH SANTA



Santa Claus with one of the Town's special volunteers, Joann Worden.

Santa Claus made his annual trip from the North Pole to have breakfast with the youngsters of La Plata on Saturday, December 10th.

As Santa posed for pictures and visited, participants feasted on chicken biscuits, "reindeer" donuts, grapes, Chex mix, juice, and coffee. Everyone left with happy tummies and smiling faces.



OLDE TYME HOLIDAY GATHERING

On Sunday, December 5th many gathered at the Town Hall for the annual Olde Tyme Holiday Gathering. Bringing in the spirit of the holiday season friends and neighbors enjoyed activities, entertainment, refreshments, and a visit from Santa.

Inside Town Hall, the music was non-stop with favorite holiday music from:



John the Fifer – a revolutionary era musician and leader of an old fashioned sing along.



Southern Mix Barbershop Chorus



La Plata High School Choir

In our heated activities tent participants enjoyed:



Plenty of healthy and not so healthy snacks to nibble on.



Fun crafts



Story telling with Mayor Hale



Southern Maryland Blue Crabs mascot "Pinch" and the Chik-fil-A mascot posing for pictures

And finally the arrival of the guest of honor:



Santa Claus

Thanks to everyone who joined us. A special thanks to those that helped out.

TOWN HALL DECORATIONS

Ever wonder how the Town Hall gets decorated for the holidays. Well the Town's Beautification Commission and Public Works staff put on their elves hats and spend the stay adorning the building inside and out with beautiful decorations. Thanks so much for your hard work.



WEBSITE POLL



Visit the Town of La Plata's website at <http://www.townoflaplata.org> to participate in an online poll. Click on the 'Snap Poll' link on the left side of the web page to go to the poll and see the results to date. The current question is:

How were you affected when the Tornado struck La Plata on April 28, 2002?

I was directly impacted

A member of my family was directly impacted

I have friends that were directly impacted

I lived nearby, but the tornado did not affect me or my family

I didn't live in the area

December Website Poll Results

Below are the website 'Snap Poll' results from the last issue. The question and results are:

How have the challenges in the economy impacted La Plata, its residents, and businesses? Choose the response that best describes how La Plata has fared compared to 2007.

Far better off than 2007 – 15%

Better off than 2007 – 0%

Slightly better off than 2007 – 10%

Same as 2007 – 15%

Slightly worse off than 2007 – 30%

Worse off than 2007 – 20%

Far worse off than 2007 – 10%

It has been four years since the economy was at its peak. In 2008 the simultaneous erosion in both the stock market and housing market had a dramatic effect across the national and global economies. Locally, that impact has been muted compared to other regions due to the high median household income, and large percentage of people employed by the federal government, the military, and their contractors.

La Plata has not been immune to the effects of the economy. The most notable impact, other than those directly affected, is the impact on real estate. While there is still new housing construction in La Plata, new home construction has slowed considerably since 2007. Homes remain on the market longer, and existing home prices have dropped, challenging those interested in selling. Changes in the finance industry have made it difficult for many people wanting to purchase a home to qualify for financing, despite extremely low borrowing rates. Even those looking to refinance find they cannot, often due to an inadequate appraisal.

The lower real estate construction impacts the Town's budget with less revenue generated by building permits and fees. While that had not historically been a large portion of the Town's revenue, it contributes to the restricted fiscal environment the Town operates in. This January, La Plata residents received their reassessment notice from the State of Maryland. Maryland assesses the value of your property once every three years. Three years ago under the last reassessment, it was still a little early in the economic decline to see the impact in

assessments. Today, many of you saw the State's valuation drop for your property, and the impact is evident.

In La Plata the total valuation of the Town dropped by 15%. Some properties may have been a little more, and others a little less. The impact to the Town is that the largest revenue source in the Town's General Fund, real estate property tax, had a tangible decline. This spring the Town Council will develop its budget with not just the rising costs of doing business, the loss of most of its permit revenue, and most of the intergovernmental revenue for highway user funds and law enforcement taken back by the State of Maryland as it had over the past four years, but also a large decline in property tax revenue to account for.

The snap poll reveals the impact felt by members of this community, and the challenges of the economy are borne by residents, businesses, organizations, and local government as well.

Commercial Building Permits issued 11/1/11-12/31/11

Chipotle – 105 Drury Drive

La Plata Station – 30 Shining Willow Way

Use & Occupancy Permits issued 11/1/11-12/31/11

Centennial Street Salon – 6780 Crain Highway

NEW EMPLOYEE

Robert A. Nielsen



On January 9, Robert Nielsen joined the La Plata Police Department as a patrol officer. Born in Anaheim, California he served in the United States Air Force for 6 years before joining the Charles County Sheriff's Office as a Correctional Officer in 2007. He was offered a job by the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office as a deputy in 2008 and served the citizens of St. Mary's for over three years prior to being offered the position with the La Plata Police Department. Robert graduated from the Southern Maryland Criminal Justice Academy at the top of the class for both academics and fire arms. He is also working on his AAS with the College of Southern Maryland and plans on graduating in the fall of 2012 and continuing his education at the University of Maryland. Robert has been married for nearly 8 years and has two children.

Battery Recycling

Got Batteries?

Rechargeable batteries are a cost effective way to power all types of electronic devices. So what do you do with all your dead batteries, rechargeable or otherwise?

Recycle them! The Town Hall is a recycling station for your old AA, AAA, C, D, 9-volt, cell phone and button batteries. Bring your old, dead batteries into the Town Hall and place them in the designated container in the front lobby and we will do the rest. Please don't throw your old batteries away in the trash. La Plata will make sure they are properly processed and don't end up in the landfill.

TOWN OF LA PLATA

305 Queen Anne Street
P. O. Box 2268
La Plata, Maryland 20646-2268

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Town Notes is a publication of the Town of La Plata.



Pictured from left to right: Deacon Brown-Myrda, Rico Harley, Darian Dunnington, Samuel Chernoff, Curtis Watkins, Town Manager, Daniel Mears and Rachel Chernoff.

Cub Scout Pack 415 visits Town Hall

Members of Cub Scout Pack 415, National Capital Area Council recently visited the Town Hall to learn about the services provided by local municipal government.

MAYOR HALE VISITS 4TH GRADERS

The best way to ensure students understand local government is to hear it directly from an official.

On December 13, Mayor Hale visited the 4th grade students at Grace Lutheran

Church and School and made a presentation on how municipal government works. Interested in a school visit? Mayor Hale would be happy to visit your school to talk about municipal government, its role in the

community and how communities are all about people working together. To schedule a visit please contact Michelle Miner at the Town Hall (301) 934-8421.