

# TOWN NOTES

*News from La Plata Town Hall*



## MAYOR'S CORNER

Winter has arrived in full force and I am sure the principal question of the day is: How many days until spring? I do not know about you, but I am not a big fan of cold and wet weather. If we move Christmas to July, maybe we could skip winter altogether.

Albeit it is cold outside, the Town's responsibility of providing the best services possible to all residents goes on unabated. Our public works staff continues to perform an outstanding job in going about their daily tasks, notwithstanding the weather, to ensure the trash is picked up on time, roads remain clear, and our water and sewer systems function properly. Some of our public works personnel spent all day on Thanksgiving fixing broken water pipes. Their holiday dinner was delayed substantially to ensure those affected by the water breaks could enjoy their activities as quickly as possible. Our police personnel are out every day performing their important functions even in the most undesirable conditions. Recently, one of our officers helped a homeless person find shelter and the officer also provided financial assistance out of his own pocket. Another officer was instrumental in locating and stopping a vehicle that was wanted in an armed robbery in King George, Virginia. It is easy to take systems for granted when everything is running properly, but a friendly wave or a thank you once in awhile to our staff is always appreciated.

An independent accounting firm has audited the financial statements, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and we

Continued on page 3

## Comptroller Peter Franchot Kicked off the Holidays in La Plata



*Comptroller Franchot shaking hands with Pizza Hotline owner Chris Heinze. Looking on Lorraine Hennessey, and Mayor Roy Hale.*



*Franchot with Joson's Fine Jewelry owner Josh Joson (center), Mayor Roy Hale and Councilman Joe Norris*



*Franchot with Charles Street Bakery owner Debra Taylor.*

Comptroller Peter Franchot encouraged residents to “Shop Maryland for the Holidays” and kicked off his 2013 shopping tour in La Plata on November 21, 2013. La Plata was the first of many planned stops on the Comptroller’s annual tour promoting the fantastic retailers and community shopping areas throughout the state. He began his tour of La Plata at Charles Street Bakery enjoying homemade pastries prepared by owner Debra Taylor. He then moved down the street to Island Music and was given a tour by owners Keith and Nicki Grasso. On his way to Bernie’s Frame shop Franchot made an unexpected stop into Martin’s Service center to visit with Caroline Martin at the gift shop. Onward to Bernie’s Frame shop where Franchot purchased some holiday cards from owner Debbie Almassy and then preceded next door to Pizza Hotline to meet owner Chris Heinze. Franchot was greeted by staff with one of their signature Greek pizzas. The tour rounded out at Joson’s Fine Jewelry where owner Josh Joson helped Franchot pick out a special treat for his four legged friend at home.



Town of La Plata

## COUNCIL COLUMN

### Councilman Lynn Gilroy, Ward 3

By now all the Christmas decorations should be down and we are working on following through on our new year resolutions. I hope each of you had a delightful holiday season as much as I and my family did.

We are still busy at Town Hall with the budget work sessions and our upcoming retreat. We are also still working on the petition of annexation of the HUB at CSM and the preparation of an annexation agreement.

The Maryland legislature opened on January 8, 2014. With that opening we are working with the Maryland Municipal League to completely restore to the 157 municipal governments that it represents highway user revenues (HUR).

These highway user revenues provided towns and cities, including the Town of La Plata, the funds for local road maintenance. The last time these funds were fully funded was 2008. Budget cuts instituted since then by the State to balance its general fund budget have decimated HURs.

What this means to the Town of La Plata is that if we do not receive these funds at the same level prior to the cuts we will find our roadways deteriorating and we may be forced to find other revenue sources.

Please contact your legislative representatives and let them know you support Highway User Revenues being fully funded for the Town of La Plata.

I look forward in hearing from you so we can try and solve our future issues together. Please feel free to contact me at [lgilroy@townofaplata.org](mailto:lgilroy@townofaplata.org), by calling Town Hall at (301) 934-8421 or by cell at (301) 653-1440.

### Councilman Joe Norris, Ward 4

New Years greetings to everyone. I am writing this in early January and am already amazed at the cold temperatures that we have been experiencing. Of course it is during times like this when we often experience water main breaks and other problems common to winter. As always I am grateful to our Public works Department for the job they do whether rain, sleet, snow, or cold. They take care of our trash in any kind of weather and are out day and night repairing pipes, etc. while I am home warm and in bed. Thanks to all our Town personnel for keeping the Town running smoothly.

As always I like to promote our volunteer Boards and Commissions for their work serving the town. I want to take this opportunity to ask you to consider checking out what these committees do and ask

you to sign up if there is something that interests you. Applications are available at townofaplata.org. Click on Commissions and then Application. If you have questions about this give any of the Council Members a call.

As you are aware the Council is considering a petition for a large annexation (472 acres) with a request for Planned Business Park and Enterprise Zone type zoning. If you have questions contact any of our Council members and make your feeling heard at the Public Hearing which will be held prior to any action. I believe it will be good for the Town if structured properly helping with our tax base and bringing employment opportunities. Even so we still encourage your thoughts and ideas.

Please remember to recycle as much as possible which is good for the Town and the environment. Also remember we have a battery recycling program. Just drop off your batteries at the lobby in Town Hall. Batteries can be toxic so proper disposal is important.

As always if you have any questions or issues, I may be reached by phone at (301) 934-9230 or by email at [jnorris@townofaplata.org](mailto:jnorris@townofaplata.org). Thank you for allowing me to serve.

## NEW EMPLOYEES



### Allen Martin

Allen Martin joined the Town Staff in October as a Public Works Tech I. He was born and raised in Charles County. Allen is married with two children and lives in La Plata. In his spare time, Allen loves spending time with his family and three dogs and also enjoys nature rides on his four wheeler.



### Chris Crafts

Chris Crafts joined the Town Staff in December as a Mechanic. He was born at Andrews Air Force Base. He has lived in Charles County since 1987. He graduated from Thomas Stone High School in 2000. Chris's favorite hobby is drag racing, he has traveled all over North America racing the world's fastest diesel truck. He also enjoys working on anything with an engine, spending time with his family, goods friends, and his dog Buddy.

## 2013 HOLIDAY DECORATIONS CONTEST WINNERS

### Residential Winners:

Charleston Terrace

Honorable Mention Residential – Whimsical  
Will & Jennifer Mayhew

Quailwood

Honorable Mention Residential – Whimsical  
William and Mary Ann Yeckley

Jamestowne

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Residential – Traditional  
Hebner Family

Clarks Run

1<sup>st</sup> Place Residential – Traditional  
Dugan Family

3<sup>rd</sup> Place Residential – Traditional  
Roy and Ann Hale

Kings Grant

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Residential – Whimsical  
Price Family

3<sup>rd</sup> Place Residential – Whimsical  
McCourt Family

### Commercial Winners:

1<sup>st</sup> Place Commercial – Traditional  
UM Charles Regional Medical Center

1<sup>st</sup> Place Commercial – Whimsical  
Optical Shoppe of La Plata

## Assistant Director of Finance retires



After over 32 years of service in the Town's finance office, Gale Crooks has retired. Co-workers and former employees enjoyed a casual lunch and reminisced about the past and wished her much luck for the future.

## BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED

### Commercial Building Permits issued

11/1/13-12/31/13

Physical Therapy – 101 Centennial Street

### Commercial Occupancy Permits issued

11/1/13-12/31/13

Best Western- 6900 Crain Highway

La Plata Nails & Spa – 216 Rosewick Road

The Loft Hair Salon – 403 Charles Street #4

Max Muscle Sports Nutrition – 6613 Crain Highway

Fringe Hair Salon – 140 Drury Drive

Red Oak Bistro – 6390 Crain Highway

Ultimate Flooring – 6541 Crain Highway

Five Guys Burgers & Fries – 230 Rosewick Road

Perfect Nails – 6249 Crain Highway

## MAYOR'S CORNER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

expect to receive a report that all financial accounts were maintained in a proper manner and all financial transactions were duly recorded in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Once again the Town will receive what is referred to as a "clean opinion." Our Town Treasurer and his staff are to be commended for the long hours and diligent work that goes in to receiving this important opinion.

This is an important time of year for our Town Council and Town Staff. It is the time when we commence work on the budget for the next fiscal year. While there is still important work to be done and projects yet to complete, our limited sources of revenue are still below what we have experienced in prior years due principally to the reduction in property values and the loss of a substantial portion of our highway user fees. Limited resources restrict some projects and postpone others, but providing the highest level of service is still our number one priority and will remain so for the foreseeable future. On the bright side, the recent improvement to our sidewalks in the downtown area, provided by the State of Maryland, the completion of the substantial upgrade to our waste-water treatment plant, improvement to our parks and recreation facilities, a strong events program, and commercial additions to our Town continue to ensure that La Plata is and will remain a wonderful town.

I wish everyone a happy and prosperous new year.

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

## Town Hall Closed

The Town Hall will be closed on the following days:

**Presidents' Day**

**Monday, February 17, 2014**

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

Lynn D. Gilroy . . . . . 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

Police Chief, Carl H. Schinner

### Director of Planning and Community

Development: David M. Jenkins

Director of Operations: Robert F. Stahl, Jr.

Director of Public Works:

Jeffrey S. Garner

Project Manager: Steven F. Schroeder

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@townoflaplata.org

Website: www.townoflaplata.org

# 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

Household hazardous waste collection will resume in April on the first Satur-



CHARLES COUNTY  
**HOUSEHOLD  
HAZARDOUS WASTE  
COLLECTION**

day 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 collection is a contracted service and items cannot 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.

## Yard Waste Pick Up

Residential yard waste pickups will only take place on Monday and Fridays. Containers of yard waste ONLY – leaves, grass and shrub clippings, brush or branches may be put out on Mondays and Fridays. The containers must be marked “Yard Waste”. Brush or branches must be bundled, weigh no more than 50lbs. per bundle, and the branches may not be larger than 4 feet long. *Plastic bags are not allowed – if you bag yard waste you must use paper bags.*

## Trash Collection Schedule Adjustment

**If your regular trash collection day is:**

Monday, February 17, 2014

**Yard Waste Pick Up Schedule Adjustment**

Monday, February 17, 2014

**Trash will be picked up on:**

Tuesday, February 18, 2014

No Pick Up

# MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WORKS



Mayor Hale(back row center) visited Claudia Knudson's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class at Grace Lutheran Church and School in La Plata. November is designated as “Municipal Government Works” month by the Maryland Municipal League. Elected officials are encouraged to visit classes in their community to discuss the role of elected officials and municipal government with the students.

## Neighborhood Event Mini-Grant

Is your neighborhood interested in organizing an event like a block party or cook out to bring your community together? If so then help is here. Town of La Plata Neighborhood Event Mini-Grant is designed to provide an opportunity for Town of La Plata residents to strengthen their neighborhoods through producing special events. The Town of La Plata invites neighborhood associations and communities to submit the neighborhood grant application for review. There will be 5 grants awarded up to \$500 each during the 2014 fiscal year. Deadline to submit application is March 3, 2014. Grant applications are available for download from the Town's website or email Colleen Wilson, Special Events Coordinator at [cwilson@townoflaplata.org](mailto:cwilson@townoflaplata.org) or (301) 934-8421 ext. 142.

# FEBRUARY 2014

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

1

2



Groundhog Day

3

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Special Pick Up, please call by 4:00 pm on 1/31 to be put on list

4

Planning Commission meeting; 7:00 pm

5

Design Review Board Meeting; 9:00 am  
Crime Watch Council Meeting; 7:00 pm

6

Yard Waste Pick Up

7



Valentine's Day

14

Yard Waste Pick Up

15

9

Yard Waste Pick Up

10

Mayor and Council work session; 7:00 pm

11

Parks & Recreation Commission; 5:00 pm

12

20

21

22

16

No Yard Waste Pick Up  
Town Hall closed  
No Trash Pick Up  
Presidents' Day

17

Mayor and Council work session; 7:00 pm  
Trash Pick Up for 2/17/14

18

Design Review Board; 9:00 am  
Recycling may be delayed

19

20

21

22

23

Yard Waste Pick Up

24

Beautification Commission meeting; 4:00 pm



25

Mayor and Council Regular Meeting; 7:00 pm

26

27

28

Yard Waste Pick Up

# MARCH 2014

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

1

2

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Special Trash Pick Up,  
please call by 4:00 2/28

3

Planning Commission  
meeting: 7:00 pm

4

Design Review Board  
Meeting: 9:00 am  
Crime Watch Council  
Meeting: 7:00 pm

5

6

Yard Waste Pick Up

7

8

9



Daylight Saving

10

Yard Waste Pick Up

Mayor and Council  
work session: 7:00 pm

11

Parks and Recreation  
Commission Meeting;  
5:00 pm

12

13

Yard Waste Pick Up

14

15

16



St. Patrick's Day

17

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Beautification  
Commission  
meeting: 4:00 pm



18

Mayor and Council  
work session: 7:00 pm

19

Design Review Board  
meeting: 9:00 am

20



First Day of Spring

21

Yard Waste Pick Up

22

23/30

Yard Waste Pick Up  
3/24 & 3/31

24/31

Mayor and Council  
Regular meeting: 7:00 pm

25

26

27

28

Yard Waste Pick Up

29



**Your Mayor and Council are looking for members of the community who are dedicated to helping to form the future of La Plata**

**If you are motivated to making a difference in your community you are invited to apply for a position on one of the various Boards, Commissions and Committee's**

*Citizen volunteers are a valuable part of the decision making process.*

To assist in carrying out its responsibilities, the Town Council has established a number of Boards and Commissions staffed by volunteers. These Boards and Commissions are very much a part of the decision making process. If you want to be part of it, please fill out the application and drop it off at Town Hall.

The Town Council will keep all applications on file to be considered when making appointments to any future vacant positions.

Questions?  
Contact Danielle Mandley  
301-934-8421 or dmandley@townofaplata.org

*Town of La Plata*  
La Plata Town Hall  
305 Queen Anne Street • Post Office Box 2268 • La Plata, Maryland 20646  
(301) 934-8421 ~ (301) 870-3377 • Fax: (301) 934-5724  
web site: [www.townofaplata.org](http://www.townofaplata.org)

*If you are interested in serving on one of the Town of La Plata's Boards, Commissions and Committees please fill out the Personal History form and return it to the Town Clerk. If you have any questions please email Danielle Mandley at [dmandley@townoflaplata.org](mailto:dmandley@townoflaplata.org), or call Town Hall at 301-934-8421, Monday thru Friday 8 AM to 4 PM.*

**PERSONAL HISTORY**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived in La Plata? \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation or employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Family: Married: \_\_\_\_\_

Children, number and age: \_\_\_\_\_

Other members of household: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies or other interests: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Public Service Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE CHECK THE ONE THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN. IF MORE THAN ONE APPEALS TO YOU PLEASE NUMBER IN ORDER OF PRIORITY.**

**Beautification Commission:** Promotes the beautification of the Town by surveying all public and private properties, provides active leadership in beautification activities and makes recommendations to the Town Council where needed. *Meetings held the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM*

**Board of Appeals:** Hears and makes decisions on applications for variances, special exceptions, and appeals. *Meetings held on as needed basis.*

**Board of Supervisors of Elections:** Conducts all municipal elections; serves as the Town of La Plata Elected Officials Ethics Commission for matters regarding ethics provisions that pertain to any elected official of the Town. *Meetings held on as needed basis.*

**Crime Watch Council:** Consists of members from each neighborhood in the Town; responsible for promotion of crime prevention activities. *Meetings held the 1st Wednesday of each month at 7:30 PM at the La Plata Police Station, 101 La Grange Avenue.*

**Design Review Board:** Reviews drawings and plans for development permits for consistency with the La Plata plans and La Plata community design guide-lines. *Meetings held the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 9 AM*

**Parks and Recreation Commission:** Develops immediate and long-range plans for recreational programs and activities and provision of an adequate park system to meet the needs of all ages; provides advice to the Council on all activities in the field of recreation; performs other services involving recreational facilities, activities, programs, services or special events. *Meetings held the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 5 PM*

**Planning Commission:** Develops a Comprehensive Plan for the Town every five to ten years; reviews all subdivision plans and major construction in the Town, and makes recommendations to the Town Council on requests for zoning amendments. *Meetings held the 1st Tuesday of each month at 7 PM*

**Information Technology Advisory Committee:** Develops recommendations for comprehensive IT planning to coordinate and guide future technology implementation. *Meeting dates and times will be coordinated with the appointees once established.*

# 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:

Do you plan on participating in or watching the bed races at Celebrate La Plata this year on Saturday, April 26th?

- Yes, my team will race.
- Yes, my family will watch.
- No, I can't this year.

## December Website Poll Results

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

Given the challenges in the economy, would you support a revenue measure that would provide your most desired municipal service that is currently not provided?

	December 2013	December 2010
Strongly Support	6%	11%
Somewhat Support	9%	11%
Neither Support nor Oppose	17%	8%
Somewhat Oppose	0%	3%
Strongly Oppose	20%	63%
Don't Know	49%	5%

Have things changed in the past three years? Maybe. This Snap Poll question was first asked in the December 2010 issue of the Town Notes. At that time the downturn in the economy was relatively new. The major difference in the response at that time was 63% of the respondents answered the poll 'Strongly Oppose'. In this survey 'Neither Support nor Oppose' and 'Don't Know' gained what had been lost from the strong opposition, and the other answers remained consistent.

The Town Council uses this information, other surveys, service data, and community feedback to make decisions about the services the Town offers, and how to fund them.

The services provided by the Town of La Plata mostly consist of things that affect the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Whether it be law enforcement, utilities, or other public goods, the Town is responsible for their efficient and effective provision. There are other services that the Town provides or can provide that impact public values, and they consist of property values, quality of life, recreation, and other aspects that the community receives. The Town must find the means to provide for the community's needs, as well as its wants, while maintaining public trust.

As with many aspects of our lives, our wants exceed what we currently have. Members of our community regularly express desire for the Town to provide for their wants. While some items can be accommodated through efficiencies or changes in how service is delivered, other things require additional resources.

The challenges in our economy put fiscal stress on the Town of La Plata. Reductions in property assessments reduce the Town's taxable base, its largest source of general fund revenue. This challenges the Town's ability to finance essential services, even with its history of conservative fiscal practices. The State of Maryland has removed revenue that was once shared with La Plata adding to that stress, and removing resources once available for road maintenance and law enforcement. Highway User Revenue is still generated in La Plata through the State gas tax which was increased in 2013. Law enforcement fines are sent to the State to be distributed back to local government, however, yet the State is simply allocating portions of those two local government revenues to its programs to reduce the amount of cuts or revenue enhancements it needs to make to State services.

La Plata is a desirable, growing, and evolving community. To maintain its desirability the Town must provide what the community needs and wants. By continually looking for efficiencies in its operations, and offering the things that the community wants to support, La Plata strives to make this a great home for you and your family. If you have a service need that is not offered, please communicate that to your Town Council representative.

## Efficiency Corner

### 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.

### Storm Response

During the cold months we often think about wintery weather and the impacts on roads and travel. The Town of La Plata budgets money for overtime, salt, plows, and equipment maintenance to deal with these events. However the Town's storm response is not limited to just icy and snowy streets. At any time during the year there can be a wind or rain event that knocks over trees into the Town's rights of way, causes a washout of a roadway, or generates significant debris that needs to be removed.

Historically, the Town has set aside significant money in its budget to be prepared for any event that might occur. This could mean buying a large amount of salt to replace what had been used during the year, allocating for overtime for numerous overnight or weekend plowing operations, or equipment rental for significant storm impacts. For large storm years, there might not be enough funding, and in other years, the Town allocated tens of thousands of dollars that went unused because of a mild season.

During the current fiscal year the Town created a new method to assure adequate funding for storm response, and not encumber excessive resources for a what if scenario. The Town created a Storm Response Reserve fund. Initially funded with \$75,000, the Town plans to budget a small amount for storm response each year. In the years with mild weather, the reserve will grow. In the years with a larger need, there will be adequate funding to weather the storm response needed.

By smoothing out the Town's expenses, costs that can fluctuate from year to year will have a lessened impact on the budget. This makes the finances of the Town more predictable, and in turn, the Town is in a stronger position to handle the unexpected.

## TRAFFIC SAFETY MESSAGE

"Please drive gently." This mantra is synonymous with "Maryland Welcomes You" signs as motorists entered the Old Line State. It's Maryland's first traffic safety message. In reality, the slogan tells us to not drive aggressively, to do the speed limit, and to be courteous to fellow motorists. Although current traffic safety messages are catchier, "Click It or Ticket It" or "Don't Text and Drive," they only address a single driving behavior. In a multitasking society, we need an all encompassing traffic slogan, a creative mantra, a visionary catchphrase that addresses a multitude of negative driving behaviors..."Please drive gently."

In 2010, 32,885 people died on our nation's highways, 483 of them in Maryland. These are sobering statistics. However, in fact, the news is positive. Four years earlier, in 2006, 652 people died on Maryland's highways with 42,708 perishing nationwide. In a larger snapshot, in 1970 the U.S. population was at 205 million and 52,627 individuals died in motor vehicle collisions. By 2010, the U.S. population ballooned to 308 million yet motor vehicle fatalities declined to 32,885. This success could only be achieved through partnerships and the use of technology.

Innovations that have reduced traffic fatalities include safer vehicles with airbags, antilock brakes, and crush zones. Advanced trauma centers, life flight helicopters, and fire department medic programs have proven to save countless lives. Traffic engineers, highway safety office education programs, proactive traffic enforcement by police officers, highway troopers, and sheriff's deputies to include photo-enforcement have assisted in driving down traffic fatalities in Maryland and across the nation.

Technology certainly has made motor-ing safer. This includes red light and speed photo-enforcement. In a 2011 study, The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) "found that red light cameras prevented 159 deaths between 2004 and 2008 in 14 of the largest cities in the U.S., and that 815 deaths would have been prevented had cameras been operating in all U.S. cities with a population of over 200,000." Moreover, the IIHS study found that crashes in cities with red light photo-enforcement declined even at signalized intersections where no photo-enforcement was present. This is the true mark of a highway safety program, developing a region-wide mindset that causes a positive

change in motorist behavior even when there is no enforcement tool in place.

Data from around the globe shows that speed photo-enforcement saves lives as well. In a focused test corridor in London, traffic fatalities were reduced from 68 to 20 with the number of seriously injured in collisions down 25%. In British Columbia, researchers found a 7% reduction in crashes and a 20% decline in traffic deaths in areas where speed photo-enforcement devices were installed. Photo-enforcement technology is relatively new in the U.S.; however that data clearly shows the technology leads to a decrease in speeders and collisions. Although photo-enforcement is somewhat contentious, the technology is clearly making a difference in communities across Maryland and the U.S. as more people are arriving home safely.

Crime does not affect everyone, but traffic issues do. So please remember to Always Buckle Up, Driver Sober, Don't Text and Drive, Highway Safety is No Accident, Don't Drive Distracted, Click It or Ticket It, and Let's Not Meet by Accident. In a nutshell, "Please Drive Gently." it's the Maryland way!

## ANNEXATION

The Town of La Plata received a request from private property owners to add 472 acres to the Town of La Plata for the purpose of developing corporate office space under the Town's Planned Business Park and Enterprise District zoning category. The zoning category is established for large employers with substantial space requirements.

Those interested in the details of the project may find the submitted petition and related exhibits on the Town's web page at <http://www.townoflaplata.org>. Just follow the My Community link on the upper right side of the page. When in the My Community section, under the E-Resources link simply browse to find Petitions for Annexation. Related files are located there, or can be searched by keyword.

Annexation is the process of legally including within the corporate limits of the town, land that is outside the municipality.

The Town's authority to annex comes from Article 23A of the Annotated Code of Maryland, while Article 66B grants zoning authority.

In order for land to be annexed into an existing municipality, an area must be contiguous and adjoining to the existing municipal corporate boundary and may not be located within another incorporated municipality. Also, annexation of the area may not create an enclave of unincorporated area

that would be completely surrounded on all sides by land within the municipality upon completion of the annexation.

Filing requirements include completion of an annexation petition signed by the owners of 25% of the total assessed property in the area proposed for annexation, a non-refundable annexation fee, a plat showing current and proposed boundaries and an annexation plan, with existing and proposed zoning.

Upon acceptance of a complete annexation petition, it is forwarded to the Town Planning Commission for their review. Review comments are requested from Charles County and the Maryland Department of Planning. The Planning Commission may conduct work sessions as part of their review process. They are required to conduct a public hearing to determine the appropriate Town zoning if the annexation were to be approved. Their zoning recommendation is then forwarded to the Town Council.

The Town Council may also have work sessions as part of their review process. They are also required to have a public hearing to obtain public comment about the requested annexation petition. The Town Council is the approval authority to deny or approve all annexation petition requests. If approved, an annexation agreement is prepared and is part of any annexation approval. An annexation plan is also approved and must include pro-

posed land uses, available land that could be used for anticipated public facilities that may be needed and anticipated means of financing the extension of services. If approved the annexation is effective 45 days after passage by the Town, unless petitioned to referendum.

Petitions for a referendum require signatures at least 20% of the registered voters in the Town.

If the annexation becomes official the resultant new Town boundary must be sent to the County Clerk and the Maryland Department of Legislative Services.

In La Plata, the Town Council has customarily required an Annexation Agreement when considering an annexation that was petitioned by property owners. Annexation agreements are contractual documents that stipulate additional requirements of those petitioning to be part of La Plata. Terms of those agreements have included new infrastructure for Town water and sewer systems, enhanced landscaping requirements, green building requirements, enhanced site security, funding for new transportation or pedestrian facilities, deed restrictions on the property, recreation amenities, or other items that would provide benefit to the Town.

There are many issues that the Town Council reviews and the public debates as pros and cons to annexation. These may include increased residential or commercial develop-

*(Continued on page 12)*

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Olde Tyme Holiday Gathering

The Town of La Plata celebrated the holiday season with the Olde Tyme Holiday Gathering on Sunday, December 1st. Children enjoyed holiday crafts, horse drawn carriage rides, holiday characters, and story time from the Charles County Library. Peace Ringers, College of Southern Maryland Chorale, and John the Fifer entertained the audience with holiday music. Santa made his grand appearance to visit with children and hear their wishes for the holiday season. Thank you to all who attended and volunteered at the event!



### Breakfast with Santa



Children filled the Town Hall to share their Christmas lists with Santa on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. Santa visited with each child before heading back to the North Pole.

Stay tuned for the 2014 Special Events Calendar! Information will be posted on the Town's website in early March. Make sure to like our face book page so you can be one of the first to know what's happening in the Town. The Town's official face book page is listed as Town of La Plata and has La Plata's Town Seal as a profile picture.



Time to start your training for the Town of La Plata Bed Races! Gather three of your friends, family, or co-workers and sign up today. Bed Races take place on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm as part of the Celebrate La Plata event. Your team will race on La Grange Ave as the crowd cheers you on. We have made

it even easier this year for you to join in the fun – no registration fee and the Town will provide beds for the race. Teams may still make and decorate their own bed to use in the races. Each team must have four participants that are 16 years or older. Don't miss out on the chance to come dressed in team t-shirts or costumes to promote your business or organization. The annual bed race is a great way to do some marketing while having a lot of fun. Prizes will be awarded to the top teams and best team attire.



Photos from 2013 Bed Races courtesy of Southern Maryland News Net.

Registration deadline is April 18. For more information or to register for the Bed Races, contact Colleen Wilson at (301) 934-8421 or [cwilson@townofaplata.org](mailto:cwilson@townofaplata.org). Participation form is available on the Town's website [www.townofaplata.org](http://www.townofaplata.org).

**Fill out the interest form below to receive more information.**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teammate 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Teammate 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Teammate 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact email: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

- We are interested in racing our own bed.
- We are interested in using a Town bed.

Please return the form to:

Town of La Plata  
Colleen Wilson, Special Events Coordinator  
PO Box 2268  
La Plata, MD 20646

Or email the information to [cwilson@townofaplata.org](mailto:cwilson@townofaplata.org).

*(Continued on page 12)*

# TOWN OF LA PLATA

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

PRESORTED  
FIRST CLASS MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
WALDORF, MD  
PERMIT NO. 10131



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

## Special Events (continued from page 11)

### Community Shred and Electronics Recycling at Town Hall

Dispose of your personal documents and recycle unwanted electronics in a safe and secure manner. Drop off your documents and items at Town Hall on Thursday, April 10th from 2 pm to 6 pm.

Residents and businesses may bring up to 4 files boxes of personal papers for shredding. Please see list of accepted and prohibited items on the Town's website. Residential material of a sensitive nature such as tax documents, financial records, etc. (Please recycle junk mail and magazines through your normal collection service.)

Please see list on Town's website for acceptable electronic items. Data destruction for hard drives is available for \$10. CRT monitors will be charged \$20 and CRT televisions will be charged at \$2.00 per diagonal inch to be recycled. All payments must be made on site prior to destruction/recycling. Please bring check or cash for payments.

Procedures for the Community Shred and Electronics Recycling event are outlined on the Town's website under the Events page. For more information please contact Colleen Wilson, Special Events Coordinator at (301) 934-8421 or [cwilson@townofaplata.org](mailto:cwilson@townofaplata.org).

### Upcoming Events

#### Community Shred and Electronics Recycling at Town Hall

Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup>: 2 pm to 6 pm

### Ice Cream with the Easter Bunny

Monday, April 21st: 11 AM to 1 PM

Hop on in for ice cream with the Easter Bunny! Stop by the La Plata Town Hall on the Monday after Easter, April 21st from 11 AM to 1 PM. Bring the kids for ice cream, crafts, and visit with the Easter Bunny.

### Celebrate La Plata

Saturday April 26th: 12 noon to 4 PM

The Town of La Plata will come together for a day of family fun at the annual Spring Festival, Celebrate La Plata on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. Enjoy a day of activities for children of all ages at Celebrate La Plata; face painting, displays, entertainment, refreshments for sale from local favorites and ever entertaining Bed Races!

## Annexation (continued from page 10)

ment, expansion of the Town's assessable base, Town input and control over future land use in areas adjacent to the Town, changes in traffic, storm water management, neighborhood character, crime, new commercial services, logical Town boundaries, mitigation of environmental problems like failing septic systems, concessions for public facilities improvements, concern of impact on municipal services, or other items related to the petitioned annexation.

There exists a perception that annexations are commonplace in La Plata, which is not the case. Just one annexation for 14 acres has been approved in the past seven years. Most of the new development proposed for La Plata is coming from land that was annexed into Town well over 20 years ago. Today there are three petitions for annexation that have been submitted to the Town, however just one, the HUB petition has been referred to the Planning Commission.

The State requires local governments to define a Municipal Growth Area, that

designation requires towns to plan for how they could provide basic municipal services to the area. La Plata complied with the State requirement as part of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, yet, by practice, the Town does not solicit land to annex. The Town must review petitions for annexation that have been submitted by adjoining property owners. There is always the possibility a petition may be filed, and La Plata residents are notified of public meetings if any are submitted.