

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
July 8, 2003, 7:00 PM

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

Guests: (see roster)

Minutes:

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

Approval of May minutes (deferred from June 10 meeting)

Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 6 special meeting, May 6 closed meeting, May 13 regular meeting, May 20 closed meeting, and the May 27 regular meeting, and to open the minutes of the closed meetings to the public. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Approval of June minutes

Councilman Ambrogio made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 10 regular meeting and the June 30 special meeting. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Treasurer's Report

Mayor Eckman acknowledged receipt of the Treasurer's Report dated May 31, 2003.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances (none)

The agenda was corrected by Mayor Eckman to indicate that Sandy Washington-Kent Avenue Corridor Survey Results would be on the July 22 agenda.

Mayor Eckman presented a check in the amount of \$10,000.00 from the Maryland Mayors Association, to be used to purchase large trees to be planted along Oak Avenue.

Legislation

Ordinance 03-7 Historic District Landmark Designation (For Introduction) – For the purpose of designating a certain property known as 105 La Grange Avenue as an historic District landmark in the Town of La Plata; and all matters generally relating to said historic District designation.

Mr. Miller provided a brief explanation of this resolution, noting that the Historic District Commission has recommended that 105 La Grange Avenue be designated an historic district landmark.

Public Hearing

Ordinance 03-7 Historic District Landmark Designation) - For the purpose of designating a certain property known as 105 La Grange Avenue as an historic district landmark in the Town of La Plata; and all matters generally relating to said historic district designation.

Mayor Eckman opened the hearing. Mr. Miller advised for the record that the hearing had been properly advertised in the June 20, 2003 edition of the Maryland Independent. [The Certificate of Publication is on file in the Town Hall.]

Mayor Eckman invited Thomas C. Hayden, Jr., owner of 105 La Grange Avenue, to speak about his request for historic district landmark designation. Mr. Hayden displayed photographs and discussed the past uses of the building. Mr. Hayden described the type of building construction methods used by the builder, Walter Willett, and noted that the building was built in 1948. Mr. Hayden pointed out that he felt it was significant that 85% of the building was saved from destruction by the April, 2002 tornado, and credited that to the building's construction technique.

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 from the audience and no further discussion by the Town Council, Mayor Eckman closed the hearing.

Unfinished Business

Council reports

Councilman Ambrogio reported on several items related to the Kent Avenue Corridor Revitalization Committee: (1) An event was held on June 13, to announce the new name of the community formerly known as The Meadows to be "Phoenix Run"; (2) The Town has paid for 10 new cobra-style street lights on Caroline Drive; (3) Heritage Place Apartments has rented 26 of the 32 apartments in their three buildings; (4) The last Kent Avenue Corridor Revitalization Committee was held last week; they plan to begin turning running of the meetings over to the community's residents, and the first Wednesday in August will be an evening meeting; (5) The community will participate in National Night Out events August 5, at 6:00 PM.

Councilman Fritz reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission would be meeting July 9, at 5:00 PM, and will be reviewing data to enable them to make decisions regarding the upgrades to the parks at the Train Station and on Caroline Drive. Councilman Fritz advised that within the next two months the tennis courts at Wills Park and Silver Linden Park will be recoated.

Mayor Eckman reported that over \$350,000 of grant money from the State had been distributed to individual property owners as incentive grants to rebuild more in line with the Town's Vision Plan, and that the Town acquired the property for the extension of Centennial Street and new street lights on that extension and on La Grange and Maple Avenues. He noted that street lights on Charles Street will be done as part of the State's streetscape project, hopefully next year, depending on funding. Mayor Eckman reported that the Town was not able to get the public parking taken care of at the Charles County Rescue Squad and Bales properties, but noted there may still be the potential to provide public parking. Mayor Eckman also reported that the State has completed the engineering on the extension of Centennial Street and redoing La Grange and Maple Avenues, and has awarded a contract for the project to improve the intersection of Routes 6 and 301 (in the change lanes), which includes crosswalks with pedestrian controls. Mayor Eckman reported that he will be serving on the Hellman Commission, regarding transportation funding, and that meetings will be held every other Tuesday until the end of October, at which time they should have prepared a report on a recommendation to the Transportation Trust Fund.

In response to Mayor Eckman's request, Mr. Miller provided an update on the sewer line problems on St. Mary's Avenue. Mr. Miller advised that the original sewer system was built in the 1950s with concrete pipe, which is beginning to disintegrate due to age and sewer gas. In February, there was a sewer line collapse which the Town repaired. During the first part of July, following 4" of rain which entered the sanitary storm system, another line collapsed. The Town's Public Works crew worked through the night on Thursday, July 3, and all the next day. The Town was able to get a local company, Facchina Construction, to help as the needed repairs were beyond the Town's ability to complete without additional help. The repairs were completed today; however, Mr. Miller noted that this is a precursor to much work that is needed to be done in the old section of town.

Mayor Eckman reported that the July 4 celebration had been a good event, with approximately 1000 people in attendance. He noted that many people enjoyed touring the caboose.

New Business (none)

Public Forum

Adriana Abell, resident on Washington Avenue, expressed concerns regarding neon lights in Town, and asked if anything was being done to regulate them. Mayor Eckman explained the history of the Vision Plan process, including the adoption of an urban design plan and implementation of the Design Review Board, along with design guidelines for the Central Business District and for the Commercial Highway District. He noted that the Town is in the process of amending the sign regulations, and that an ordinance will be introduced in August, followed by the public hearings phase, and that it should be adopted in October.

Marilyn Hoffman, a resident of Quailwood Townhomes and homeowners' association board member, explained that they had been informed the Town planned to pave all streets in Quailwood except those in the townhomes section. She asked if that information was accurate,

and if it was, could the plan be changed to include the townhomes area. Mayor Eckman advised that the Town was only planning to repave Quailwood Parkway due to the bad shape of that road. Ms. Hoffman advised that the townhomes homeowners' association was looking at repaving their parking spaces and would have to rethink that project. Mayor Eckman advised her it may still be possible to get a better price for their project by working with the Town's contractor for the Quailwood Parkway job.

Mayor Eckman announced that, due to the rain-outs, the concert series has been extended to include concerts by Smith Tucker Band on September 12 and Bottom Line Band on September 19.

There being no further business, Councilman Fritz made a motion to adjourn at 7:40 PM. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk