

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Work Session-Joint meeting with County Commissioners
April 17, 2007, 4:00 PM

Present: Town of La Plata

Mayor Gene Ambrogio, Councilman R. Wayne Winkler, Councilwoman Paretta D. Mudd; Joseph W. Norris, Acting Town Manager; Michelle D. Miner, Assistant Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk; Cassin B. Gittings, Chief, La Plata Police Department

Charles County

Commissioner President Wayne Cooper, Commissioners Reuben B. Collins, II, Samuel N. Graves, Jr. and Gary V. Hodge; Roy Hancock, Interim County Administrator; Denise Ferguson, Clerk; Jason Groth, Program Manager-Adequate Public Facilities Program, Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management; Sheriff Rex W. Coffey and Major Joseph C. Montminy, Charles County Sheriff's Office

Minutes:

Mayor Ambrogio called the meeting to order at 4:10 PM.

Joint meeting with the County Commissioners

Description: Periodic meeting between the two elected bodies to discuss matters of mutual concern.

Town Police/County Sheriff update

Chief Gittings provided an update regarding efforts to fill a vacancy in the La Plata Police Department; start-up of a bicycle patrol; joint planning between Town Police/County Sheriff for the Kent Avenue corridor area. In response to Commissioner Cooper's question, Chief Gittings remarked that past issues between the Town Police/County Sheriff are resolved.

County illegal immigrant policy

Councilwoman Mudd voiced her concern regarding criminal acts committed by an illegal immigrant in another jurisdiction which had no policy in place and asked if the Sheriff's Office asked arrested immigrants about their immigration status. Commissioner Collins advised that state legislation would be needed to place such a provision in the Criminal Code. Commissioner Graves advised that local law enforcement agencies can't enforce federal laws, that only the Department of Immigration can enforce those laws. Councilwoman Mudd also asked if the County had a hiring policy regarding immigrants. Commissioner Cooper advised that the County complies with federal laws and standards. It was noted that the Town and County should work together on this issue, and that it should be researched and reviewed by the Town Attorney and the County Attorney.

Washington Avenue sidewalk

Councilman Winkler led the discussion regarding providing sidewalk along Washington Avenue, which he noted is part of the Town's "walking downtown" plan. Councilman Winkler noted that in the past the County agreed to pay for half the cost of the sidewalk but had last said to wait until the Transportation Study was completed. Councilman Winkler noted that the Town has money in the budget

for the project but that staff informed them of culverts in need of repair under the roadbed. Councilman Winkler advised he wanted the consensus of the County and the Town to proceed after the Transportation Study. Commissioner Cooper stated he thought that was the agreement and noted he was unaware of the culverts which need to be repaired.

Location for Library in La Plata

Mayor Ambrogio asked for assurance from the County Commissioners that if the Library is relocated it would remain in the downtown vicinity. Councilman Winkler suggested that Wills Park be considered as a possible location for a joint venture between the Town and the County, and that “green” building techniques be employed. Commissioner Cooper advised that the County does not plan to move the Library out of the Town. In response to Councilwoman Mudd, Commissioner Cooper advised that the amount of land needed for the Library could be reduced if shared parking is available.

Sewer overflows – status of corrective action

Mr. Norris provided an update on work being performed by the Town.

Transportation update

Michelle Miner provided an update on the Town’s Transportation Study, noting that the consultant, RBA, would be conducting counts in May-June, produce documents for the Town and County to review shortly thereafter, and that completion is expected by late August or September. Jason Groth provided an update on the County’s Transportation Study, noting a model is expected by July and is dealing with current and future growth transportation needs.

Mayor Ambrogio reported that Ms. Miner would partner with the County for events during the County’s 350th Anniversary celebration.

Commissioner Cooper invited the Town to send representatives to a housing seminar on April 25 to discuss workforce and affordable housing. Mayor Ambrogio and Ms. Miner will represent the Town.

Commissioner Cooper provided an update on the Blue Ribbon Panel on Diversity, noting that it is hoped that a committee will be established by the end of the month.

The joint meeting concluded at 4:48 PM.

The next meeting of the Town Council and County Commissioners will be held at 4:00 PM, July 10, 2007, at the Charles County Government Building.

Matters of Council Discussion

Following a short break held after the conclusion of the quarterly joint work session with the County Commissioners, Mayor Ambrogio reconvened the work session at 5:05 PM.

Mr. Norris reported that the Town had a tree removed after the recent storm. The tree was on property near the Raymond property and appeared to be in imminent danger of falling on the apartment building.

Budget

Description: Mr. Norris will discuss FY08 budget items with the Council.

Mr. Norris discussed three items with the Council:

- Amendments will be needed to increase Sanitation fees by 10% rather than 3% as proposed.
- He has been discussing with Mr. Eckman the need to increase major facility fees. The suggested increase is \$1700/EDU.
- The Town Council previously approved the electric read ground meters in the FY2008 budget. Mr. Norris asked the Council to put them in the current budget in order to continue this work. A budget amendment will be needed if this is approved.

Council consensus: The Council agreed to increasing Sanitation fees by 10%, increasing the major facility fee by \$1700/EDU, and including the electric read ground meters in the current budget. The Council further agreed that Mr. Norris is to be the primary person to respond to questions regarding the reasons for the increased fees, and will explain the increases in operating costs to the Town.

Matters of Information

Mr. Norris provided an update on the property acquisition for the new Public Works building.

In response to Councilwoman Mudd, Mr. Norris advised that the Town Attorney is dealing with the issue of the tornado-damaged dwelling in Clarks Run. A general discussion ensued regarding enforcement of repairs to buildings in a state of disrepair.

Councilwoman Mudd led a brief discussion regarding the possibility of allowing the Town Council to relax certain of the design guidelines on a case-by-case basis. It was recommended that this not be done and to let the guidelines and current process be allowed to remain in place.

Future Work Session Topics (none)

There being no other business, Mayor Ambrogio moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:58 PM. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it carried.

Submitted by:

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk