

Council of the Town of La Plata  
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland  
Work Session  
December 9, 2008, 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor Roy G. Hale, Councilman James Goldsmith, Councilman Scot D. Lucas, Councilwoman Paretta D. Mudd; Daniel J. Mears, Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk; Robert W. Oliphant, Treasurer; Robert F. Stahl, Jr., Director of Operations

Minutes:

Mayor Hale called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

#### FY08 Audited Financial Statement

*Description: Rodney J. Saunders, of McGladrey & Pullen, LLP, to present the FY08 Audited Financial Statement.*

Mr. Saunders provided an overview of the Town's FY08 Audited Financial Statement, prepared by McGladrey & Pullen, LLP, and responded to questions posed by the Town Council.

#### Geothermal information

*Description: Barry Lewis will present information on geothermal systems.*

Mr. Lewis presented information regarding geothermal systems and responded to questions posed by the Town Council. Information presented included a comparison of efficiencies of geothermal systems and house systems; the advantage of house systems over geothermal systems being the lower installation costs; the long payback period for geothermal systems, which may be adversely affected by expensive repairs; heat pump systems improving in efficiency and getting close to geothermal in efficiency; and best value for energy conservation in buildings are the lighting and windows that are installed.

#### Business signage

*Description: Discussion regarding temporary signage rules for economic development.*

Councilman Lucas stated he was the owner of two small businesses in La Plata, then recused himself from the discussion and left the table to sit in the audience.

Mr. Mears briefly described the written request of the La Plata Business Association (LPBA) to waive banner fees for 1 year and allow banners to remain up for longer than the 21 days allowed 6 times per year, which they suggested be lengthened to 3 months.

Jim DiMisa, a member of the LPBA's Board of Directors, was invited to join the Council to discuss the LPBA's request. In addition to the banner signs topic, the following items were also discussed:

- LPBA is pursuing plans for “First Friday” events such as done by the Town of Leonardtown.
- “Welcome” bags for new residents program: LPBA disappointed that they have not been delivered. It was explained to Mr. DiMisa that the Town mails postcards to new residents, which information is obtained via utility accounts, advising them to come to Town Hall to pick up the Welcome bags. There are low numbers of new residents moving into La Plata, and they are not all coming in to get the bags.

Council consensus: The Town Council agreed to temporarily table the issue of the Welcome bags and to discuss at a later date how to get the Welcome bags to new residents.

- Matt Cole, of Arizona Pizza, asked that regulations be relaxed regarding permanent signs along Rt. 301. He was advised that the Town has no jurisdiction along Rt. 301, that discussions have been held with the State of Maryland, and that the Town Council cannot affect any change in this.

Council consensus: The Town Council agreed that further research on off-site permanent signs is needed and will be discussed at a future work session.

- Suggestion to lease billboard space.

Council consensus: The Town Council agreed that further research is merited.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed that, due to the economic downturn, they wish to assist Town businesses by relaxing certain regulations regarding banners and off-site banners and off-site sandwich board signs. The Town Council agreed to a trial period until the end of March, 2009, during which the fee for banners will be waived, a permit is still required, banners will be allowed to remain up for 3 months, and off-site banners and sandwich board signs will be allowed on property only with permission of the property owner. Town Staff is to have the appropriate document prepared to enable this and bring it for Town Council action at the next business meeting.

#### § 191-46.2 Senior living communities

*Description: Discussion regarding residency and occupancy restrictions (§ 191-46.2.M. and N.)*

Councilman Goldsmith led a discussion regarding the issue of Town Code requirement that an under-55 surviving spouse has to vacate a dwelling in a senior living community, during which a comparison of County regulations to Town regulations was discussed. Councilman Goldsmith noted that if the Town wanted to provide a more lenient regulation in the Town Code, homeowners’ associations would not have to relax their regulations.

Council consensus: Following discussion, Mayor Hale appointed Councilmen Goldsmith and Lucas as a committee to research and bring recommendations back to the Town Council.

#### December and January meeting schedules

*Description: Discussion regarding (1) rescheduling the December 23, 2008 regular meeting to December 16, 2008 in place of the work session; and (2) deciding if there should be a*

*work session on Tuesday, January 20, 2009 in addition to the facilitated session scheduled on Thursday, January 22, 2009.*

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed to reschedule the December 23, 2008 regular meeting to December 16, 2008 in place of the work session, and to cancel the work session scheduled for Tuesday, January 20, 2009.

#### Matters of Information

#### Future Work Session Topics

- Additional fines, such as for loitering, etc. (Councilman Lucas/January or February)
- Flashing lights/pedestrian push-button operation at pedestrian crosswalks on Charles Street (Mayor Hale)

#### Other business

Mr. Mears provided copies of draft Resolution 08-16 Fast Food Restaurants – La Plata Village Center, and provided a brief update and description of the issue regarding McDonald's wishing to build on Lot 1-A. The Town Council agreed to act on Resolution 08-16 at the December 16 meeting.

In response to Councilman Goldsmith's question, Mr. Mears advised that Faison has not yet received written response from the County and has not provided the annexation agreement containing the final language agreed to by the Town, which will also need to be reviewed by Mr. Mears and the Town Attorney.

There being no other business, Councilman Goldsmith moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 PM. Councilwoman Mudd seconded the motion and it carried. Following a short break, the Council moved into closed session.

Submitted by:

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Judith T. Frazier  
Town Clerk