

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Work Session/Joint meeting with County Commissioners of Charles County
October 16, 2007, 4:00 PM

Present: Town of La Plata
Mayor Gene Ambrogio, Councilmen James Goldsmith, Scot D. Lucas and Paretta D. Mudd; Daniel J. Mears, Town Manager; Michelle D. Miner, Assistant Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk; Joseph W. Norris, Treasurer; Cassin B. Gittings, Chief, La Plata Police Department

Charles County
Commissioner President Wayne Cooper, Commissioners Edith J. Patterson, Reuben B. Collins, II, Samuel N. Graves, Jr. and Gary V. Hodge; Paul W. Comfort, County Administrator; Roy Hancock, Assistant to the County Administrator; Denise Ferguson, Clerk; Chuck Beall, Acting Director, Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management; Jason Groth, Program Manager-Adequate Public Facilities Program, Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management; Sheriff Rex W. Coffey

Minutes:

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

Matters of Council Discussion

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 reported that the relationship between the La Plata Police Department (LPPD) and the Charles County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) continues to be working well, and noted that the CCSO is assisting the LPPD regarding the technology aspect of their communications system. Chief Gittings also reported that the LPPD has hired three new officers, which brings the Department to its full complement of fifteen officers. Sheriff Coffey noted that CCSO and LPPD are maintaining a strong appearance in the Phoenix Run neighborhood. In response to Councilwoman Mudd's request that the CCSO community police officer be assigned to spend more time in that neighborhood, Sheriff Coffey advised he would discuss this with his staff.

In response to Commissioner Cooper's question regarding the Town establishing a police to population ratio, Mayor Ambrogio noted that the Town will increase the number of police officers as needed so as not to fall behind.

In response to Commissioner Hodge's question regarding the bus shelters' design being a safety issue, Chief Gittings advised there have been no reported incidents. Mr. Mears noted that the Town is looking at design alternatives and will need feedback from the County and the State.

Sewer Overflows – status of corrective action

Mr. Mears provided an update on activities to eliminate sewer overflows and to improve the Town's collection system:

- Construction on the sewer line from manhole 5 (at Pancakes Plus) to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is 90% complete.
- Work has commenced to prepare for abandonment of the line from the County building to manhole 5. This line is the source of much inflow and infiltration (I & I).
- Necessary easements have been received and work will begin in the next two to four weeks to install the new 12" line which will allow the Town to eliminate the Hawthorne Pump Station, which has been a significant contributor to I & I.
- Met with EPA and MDE regarding approval of the plan for the new 24" pipe from MH 13 to WWTP. The remainder of the EPA grant money is to be used on this project. Still waiting for MDE approval.
- Work is complete on the upgrade of the Mary Ball pump station and installation of a new force main to the 8" line in the median of Rt. 301 to reduce overload and provide proper capacity for future development.
- Bids advertised, with bid opening date of November 1, for installation of the new sewer line in the Walnut Hill Subdivision, to replace septic systems.

Transportation Study update

Mr. Groth advised that there is a new project manager, the field work is being completed, the document is 80% complete, and that next week he expects to receive a schedule regarding the County's model and the Town's plan. Mr. Beall advised that the Town will be invited to a meeting with RBA to receive an update.

Councilman Goldsmith noted his opinion that the proposed sidewalk along Washington Avenue will not be accomplished and asked if the County would look at alternatives to the sidewalk, such as increasing the pavement width to provide a pathway for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and to fund the alternative. Commissioner Cooper noted that a past decision was that the traffic study be completed first.

Water conservation – irrigation systems

Mayor Ambrogio advised that the Town is exploring alternatives to using potable water for irrigation of lawns and other vegetation. Following discussion, the Town and County agreed to work on a proposal to address this issue.

Communication between the Town and the County

The Town and County agreed to meet on a quarterly basis, with the exception that the January 2008 meeting be rescheduled to February. It was also agreed that planning should include a joint meeting of the Towns of La Plata and Indian Head and the County.

Proposed 2008 quarterly meeting schedule

Tuesday, February 19, 2008 – Charles County Government Building
Tuesday, April 15, 2008 – La Plata Town Hall
Tuesday, July 15, 2008 – Charles County Government Building
Tuesday, October 21, 2008 – La Plata Town Hall

Other business

Mr. Comfort advised that the County's 350th Celebration committee meeting will be held October 17. Ms. Miner will attend.

Commissioner Patterson advised that information has been provided to the Town to include a Holiday Songfest as part of the Town's Olde Tyme Holiday Gathering event in December.

Mayor Ambrogio reported that the Town will host the Fall Festival/Festival of Scarecrows Kick-off and Taste of La Plata event on October 28. The County Commissioners invited the Town Council to ride with them in the trolley.

There being no further discussion, the joint meeting concluded at 4:46 PM.

The next meeting of the Town Council and County Commissioners is tentatively scheduled to be held at 4:00 PM, February 19, 2008, at the Charles County Government Building.

Following a short break held after the conclusion of the quarterly joint meeting with the County Commissioners, Mayor Ambrogio reconvened the work session at 5:30 PM.

Holiday Tree

Description: Discussion of placement of Holiday Tree and related items.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed to accept Bob Johnston's donation to pay for the purchase of the live Blue Spruce tree, which will be placed in the circle, and to put the artificial tree in the atrium.

Placement of Town Clock

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed to consider relocating the clock to the circle, with alignment to be facing La Grange Avenue and Town Hall, and that Mr. Mears should explore the costs associated with relocating the clock.

History room

Councilwoman Mudd remarked that she had asked in the past that staff look into creating a history room in the upstairs expansion space. Mr. Mears noted that the room is currently not ADA-accessible, but acknowledged that a lift/ramp installation may be possible. During discussion, use of the atrium was mentioned for display of Town history items. Mr. Mears noted that the Town has an agreement with Mattawoman Creek Art Center for display of artworks.

Welcome basket

Councilwoman Mudd led a brief discussion regarding the status of creating a welcome basket for new residents, which would be announced by sending a post card to new residents. Mayor Ambrogio noted that the La Plata Business Association (LPBA) was to meet with Michelle Miner regarding the welcome basket and that Gayle Curry has the Council's new photographs to put on the current postcard. Following discussion, the Council agreed that Mr. Mears would ask Ms. Miner for the status of the LPBA on this project, and ask Ms. Curry for the status of the postcards.

Staff Research Items

Mr. Mears briefly described staff research items and advised that the Town Council will be asked to prioritize them:

- Sprinklers in commercial buildings – the fire department is interested in amending the Town Code to improve the requirement, and to provide a knock box requirement so the fire department can access a building without breaking in.

- LEED requirement for future building plans – include as a requirement in new annexations, and as new buildings come in; provide a "LEED scorecard" to get them thinking about it.

- Business recycling program – a member of the LPBA asked about including businesses in the recycling collection program.

- Pervious Concrete – further discussion needed to determine if this is feasible for this area, due to freeze/thaw issue.

- Potable water irrigation systems – encourage the development community to discuss and get their ideas regarding how to achieve not using potable water in irrigation systems, without being an undue burden on development or creating an unattractive environment if lawn watering is not allowed.

Councilman Goldsmith asked that some measure be provided that assures that those who are only watering their lawns not have to pay for sewer, such as a dual meter system. Councilman Lucas remarked that a complaint was received by a resident who wants a submeter for that purpose. Councilman Lucas noted he is opposed to submeters.

Parliamentary procedure

Councilman Lucas led a brief discussion regarding a review of parliamentary procedure and conduct of Town meetings. It was suggested that Dick Hellman be asked to give a presentation to the Town Council, Town staff, and other Town Boards and Commissions.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed that Mr. Mears should arrange for a presentation on Robert's Rules.

How Commissions report to the Council

Mayor Ambrogio led a brief discussion regarding the need for having the Town's Boards and Commissions provide written rather than verbal recommendations to the Town Council.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed that when a recommendation to the Town Council is made by any of the Boards and Commissions, it is to be in writing.

Crain Highway Development

Mr. Mears reported that a meeting was held with Tom McGee and Regency regarding the status of their The Shops at Oriole project, and that they were advised that the Town will be taking a close look at the traffic increase there and how it can be mitigated. The developers believe they will receive permission from SHA for a traffic signal and that SHA will want information from the Town regarding accidents at the crossover, as part of their determination of a warrant for a traffic signal. Mr. Mears noted that the Town's issues include transportation, transportation impact, land use, and impact on neighboring properties.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed to wait for the results of the RBA traffic study and the LPPD's statistics regarding accidents, after which a decision will be made regarding whether a letter will be written regarding the Town's stance on the requested traffic signal.

Other business

In response to Councilman Goldsmith, Mr. Mears provided a brief update on the status of the Radio Station Road homes annexation, noting it was in the hands of the petitioners' attorney for more information.

Councilman Lucas asked who owned the former Navy housing property on Radio Station Road, noting that the weeds and grass need to be cut.

Councilman Lucas asked that the County be asked to consider a new crossover at the intersection of Radio Station Road and Rt. 488.

In response to Councilwoman Mudd, Mr. Mears advised that the owner of the Indian Head Ironworks property advised the Town that they are entertaining a purchase offer from SMO.

Mayor Ambrogio advised that Tom Hinman will be appointed at the October 23 meeting as Alternate member to the Design Review Board, and that a chairman will be appointed at the November 27 meeting.

There being no other business, Mayor Ambrogio moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 PM. Councilman Lucas seconded the motion and it carried.

Submitted by:

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk