

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Work Session
March 10, 2009, 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor Roy G. Hale, Councilman James Goldsmith, Councilman Scot D. Lucas, Councilman Vic E. Newman; Daniel J. Mears, Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk; Robert W. Oliphant, Town Treasurer

Minutes:

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

Matters of Council Discussion

John Hayden, Project Graduation

Description: Discussion with Mr. Hayden regarding Project Graduation; Town financial support – grant/donation.

Mr. Hayden, a member of The Chemical People of Charles County, described the Project Graduation event sponsored by The Chemical People of Charles County and held at the College of Southern Maryland. Mr. Hayden advised that the event has been held for 24 years and provides a drug- and alcohol-free event for Charles County high school graduating seniors on the day they graduate from high school. Mr. Hayden said the event costs approximately \$30,000 to \$32,000 per year and noted that a monetary donation would be appreciated and that they are especially in need of chaperones.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council thanked Mr. Hayden for his presentation and informed him they would take his requests under advisement.

Moratorium on enforcement of certain sign regulations

Description: Discussion and review impact of moratorium.

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 provided a hand-out listing the temporary sign permit numbers and fees for 2009 and provided a PowerPoint presentation of photographs (taken at the end of February) of signs, noting that some were by permit and some were without permits.

Butch Hunt, a member of the La Plata Business Association's Board of Directors, was invited to join the Council to participate in the discussion. Mr. Hunt advised he had polled member businesses for feedback regarding whether the temporary moratorium had helped and received positive feedback and requests that the moratorium be continued.

During discussion, Councilman Newman noted he believed that the purpose of the off-premises sandwich board signs were only to be directing people to the businesses rather than advertising products for sale.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed to include on the March 24 agenda a document to extend the temporary moratorium another 90 days – to June 30, 2009, and to conduct an overall review of sign regulations during this period.

La Plata Business Association (LPBA)

Mr. Hunt briefly described the LPBA's Round Robin Sweepstakes program, noting that the drawing for winners will be held at the "Celebrate La Plata" Spring Festival event on April 25.

Councilman Newman asked Mr. Hunt if the LPBA would consider supplying coupons for free items (as an example: free meals) to be included in La Plata's geocache. Mr. Hunt advised he would take this up at the next meeting of the LPBA Board of Directors.

Walnut Hill sewer project

Description: Discuss connections.

Mr. Mears reported that the Town did not receive the WRAS grant for this sewer project, and noted that prior to applying for the grant, the Town Council directed staff to prepare an ordinance to amend the budget for the Walnut Hill sewer project. Mr. Mears advised that a draft ordinance has been sent to the Town Attorney and will be brought to a future work session for discussion by the Town Council.

Commercial vehicles in residential neighborhoods

Description: Discussion of problems associated with commercial vehicles being stored in residential neighborhoods.

Councilman Newman led a brief discussion regarding the increased problem of commercial vehicles being stored primarily in the older residential neighborhoods in town. He noted that the newer residential neighborhoods have restrictive covenants to prohibit storage of commercial vehicles.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed as follows:

- Determine what constitutes a "commercial vehicle" – with or without advertising?
- Determine definitions of "gross vehicle weight" and "vehicle capacity" – both terms used in Town Code (§ 181-3 and § 191-28.)
- Research other municipal codes for definitions of "commercial vehicles."
- Enforcement issue – need to check on weekends and after hours.
- Ask Town Attorney regarding how a change in the Code would impact residents who currently store commercial vehicles in residential neighborhoods.
- Narrow down what is specifically prohibited.

Enforcement issue – complaint of loud (volume) music from vehicles

Mayor Hale reported he received a complaint from a resident of Patuxent Court regarding the loud volume of music from vehicles on his street, particularly on Friday and Saturday

evenings, and noted that the resident advised he had contacted police to no avail. Mr. Mears noted that the challenge of enforcement is the need to be present to observe the actions.

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Town Council agreed that Mr. Mears will discuss this with Chief Gittings and that an article will be included in a future edition of *Town Notes* regarding reporting and enforcement of noise complaint issues.

Matters of Information

Councilman Lucas advised that he and Councilman Goldsmith will be meeting on March 11 with the homeowners' associations/boards of directors of Washington Square and Hawthorne Greene regarding residency and occupancy restrictions in senior living communities and will bring the results to a work session in April.

Future Work Session Topics

- Intensity of rental use in residential dwellings. (Councilman Lucas/April 14 or 21)
- Residency and occupancy restrictions in senior living communities – Councilmen Goldsmith and Lucas will bring results of March 11 meeting with homeowners' associations/boards of directors of Hawthorne Greene and of Washington Square and Hawthorne Greene to an April work session. (April 14)
- Parks Plan (Mayor Hale)

Other business

Mayor Hale reported that the first Vision Plan meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, March 31, at 8:00 AM, at the Town Hall.

There being no other business, Councilman Newman moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 PM. Councilman Goldsmith seconded the motion and it carried. Following a short break, the Council moved into closed session.

Submitted by:

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk