

TOWN NOTES

News from La Plata Town Hall



MAYOR'S CORNER

In order to better understand the needs of our community, the La Plata Town Council and Staff have sent questionnaires to a random sample of La Plata residents, asking for feedback on the quality and usefulness of Town services. The Council and I are committed to our responsibility to provide quality services to this community. By surveying our population, we are providing another channel for residents to communicate to the Town Council and Staff.

Our lives are filled with the responsibilities of family and work and we do not always take the time to appreciate and comment on the many services we depend upon daily. The Council and Staff are anxious to hear your thoughts and suggestions. If you are one of those who received the survey, please make the effort to complete and return it. The results will be included in a final report that the Town Council can use in planning and budgeting for the future.

In order to improve the services provided by the Town, a benchmark is needed and it is the hope of the Council that this survey will assist in establishing the standard from which improvements can be addressed.

We would like to provide the community with more opportunities to respond with their thoughts and opinions. Later in this newsletter is a survey question that can be found on the Town of La Plata's website. Please take an opportunity to answer that question which is not part of the larger survey. Our website will be regularly updated with more questions in the months to come.

Your opinions really do matter, and they help to keep the connections that our Town needs between its people, its ideas, and its services. At any time please feel free to contact me as well: genecyte@yahoo.com or 301.934.8421, ext. 129.



The Pipes Underground

Underground, water moves from place to place through a few different kinds of pipes throughout Town. They are *water* pipes, *waste water* (sewer) pipes, and *storm water* pipes. These pipes are also referred to as "lines" and "mains."

- Water that is pumped and treated by our wells in the Lower Patapsco Aquifer travels to our two water towers. A new water tower and a new water storage tank will soon be part of our system. The towers provide the pressure to deliver water through a maze of water pipes to our homes and businesses.
- Waste water from our sinks, washers, toilets, and showers leaves our homes through a sewer lateral, which is connected to sewer mains that flow mostly downhill to the Town's Waste Water Treatment Plant. In some cases, the sewer water is pumped through force mains from pumping stations to go uphill. Our treatment plant is currently being redesigned, and construction will start to upgrade our plant to a higher standard of treatment, Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR).

The Town water and sewer pipes and systems are operated and maintained through a water utility and a sewer utility, which are funded with user fees.

- There are also storm water pipes that run underground. When it rains, water is collected in storm water detention basins, and metered into a network of pipes that run under our streets, across our properties, and to our streams and other points. Over time, regulations regarding storm water control have become more stringent for new construction, so the types of detention and piping systems vary from none, to large underground detention systems, depending on when and how an area was constructed. These systems are supposed to be maintained by those whose property they are on.

COUNCIL COLUMN

Councilman Jim Goldsmith Ward 1

Hopefully you had a happy holiday season and are looking forward to a happy new year. The Town Council will be beginning its budgeting process as we look forward to the new initiatives for the Town and make plans for how we will continue paying for the plans already made.

I, along with my fellow council members, will be looking at conservation in the coming year. We need to make plans to "build green" and conserve our natural resources, particularly water. I want to work with the building industry to see what can be done for new construction within the Town to facilitate this initiative. We are awaiting the results of our traffic study done in conjunction with the county to make decisions for road improvements and future construction.

The Washington Avenue Park and Ride lights have been installed. This will finally get rid of the portable lights that were lighting up the sky. The Town will be installing the windows on each side of the shelters to provide additional safety for observation of those standing in the shelter, pending plan approval by the County and State.

If you have any thoughts or expertise on means to help our Town in areas of environment, conservation, or safety, please contact me or your Town representative. We are all working to make this a better Town for all of us.

Councilman Scot D. Lucas Ward 2

I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday season. As the New Year begins, I would like to reflect on 2007 and look towards some of the goals I have for 2008. In 2007, I attended two education conferences to help further my understanding and knowledge of my position. I learned a great deal during those conferences, including how government operates, what problems are facing most jurisdictions, how a town council

should operate, and other electives I look forward to continuing my education throughout the years.

I also initiated the August National Speed Awareness Month. I am most proud of being able to work with the La Plata Police Department, the Charles County Sheriff's Office, and the Maryland State Police, who made contact with over 950 people! The effort was designed to bring about a greater awareness of speeding through neighborhoods at the beginning of and all through the school year. All in all, I think it was a great success. My hope for 2008 is to expand the departments participating in this event.

As I look toward 2008, I would like to see everyone in the town, including businesses, try to help preserve and protect the environment by recycling and conserving energy and water. I know it's been said many times, but we only have one earth. If we don't take care of it, we can't just go buy another one. Please take a minute to see if you can help by recycling more, using less energy by installing efficient lights in your home, turning down your thermostat when you are not home, running your dishwasher during non-peak hours, or running only full loads of wash. You might find your electric and water bills a little easier to live with.

I would also like to see people get more involved with various Town committees such as the La Plata Crime Watch. Our town is a wonderful place where many people want to live for various reasons. I believe we should be proactive by having citizens patrol in their neighborhoods. Crime in La Plata is low for a couple of reasons. First and foremost are the citizens. I believe we have the best group of citizens anywhere in the country. We also have an excellent police department that patrols the town and promotes our safety. Studies have shown that working together, these groups are successful in preventing crimes.

Finally, I hope everyone votes in the upcoming elections. My father, who was a veteran of the Army, instilled in me at

a young age of what an honor, privilege, and duty it is to vote. It doesn't matter if you're Republican, Democrat or Independent, make your voice heard and vote.

I hope you have a healthy, happy and prosperous 2008.

Councilwoman Paddy Mudd Ward 3

A Happy New Year to all! Our Town was beautiful for the holidays. At our business meeting on January 22nd, we presented awards to our Christmas Decorations Contest winners. Many thanks to the La Plata Business Association, SMECO and all of you for helping to make our Town a showcase for the holidays. (SMECO worked very hard to get the light sensors on the posts and the wreaths to work together – we promise to have a solution for next year.)

The permanent lights have been installed at the Washington Avenue Park and Ride lot. I am sure our Washington Square residents are overjoyed not to have the generators humming and the bright lights shining day and night.

The Council has begun the long budget process for FY 2009. You have access to all of us through the Town web site and by calling the Town Hall. Please make us aware of your concerns. My email is paddymudd@comcast.net.

Councilman Vic Newman Ward 4

Town Budget

It's that time again when the Council will start the Budget Process, and you can be a part of it. There will be time during the process in which you can get involved about how the Council and Town Staff spend your tax dollars. Please visit your Town website (www.townoflaplata.org) to check for those dates, or email me at laplatacouncil@comcast.net.

The following are just some of the areas that will be discussed during the Budget Process:

Continued on page 4

LA PLATA TOWN SERVICES

Special Trash Pickup

Bulk items are picked up the first Monday of each month, or the following Monday if the first one is a holiday. Large amounts of loose material (such as brush) should be bundled or bagged in such a manner that the weight is less than 50 lbs. The Town reserves the right not to pick up items too heavy to safely handle. General construction cleanup and hazardous materials are not eligible. Items must be at curbside by 7:30 a.m. on pickup day. Call Town Hall before pickup day to be placed on the list. Minimum fee: \$11.00 for 5 minutes loading time; each additional minute is \$1.00. A fee of \$6.00, or the current Landfill disposal fee, shall be

charged for each tire collected. *Billing for special trash pickup is included on your quarterly utility bill.*

Town of La Plata Snow Policy

The Town has an emergency snow removal plan to clear Town streets if it snows enough that Town snow plowing crews must be called out. To view the policy, please visit the Town's web page at www.townoflaplata.org.

Yard Waste Pickup

Containers of yard waste ONLY - leaves, grass and shrub clippings, brush or branches - may be put out on your regular trash day for pickup that day **or the next day**. The containers must be marked "Yard Waste." Brush or branches must be bundled, weigh no more than 50 lbs. per bundle, and the branches may not be larger than 4 inches in diameter or more than 4 feet long. *Plastic bags are not allowed - if you bag yard waste you must use paper bags.*

Trash Collection Schedule Adjustments

(There are no changes to the trash collection schedule for February and March 2008.)

CONSERVATION CORNER

Residents can help prevent contamination of our streams and waterways by ensuring they don't pollute their property, and in turn, what is washed by precipitation into storm water pipes and our waterways.

- Maintain your vehicle so it does not leak oil or other fluids.
- Reduce your use of pesticides and fertilizers and other yard chemicals.
- Compost your yard debris.
- Garden with native plants, and construct a 'rain garden' to collect runoff from your gutters and paved areas.
- Allow chlorine to dissipate from pool or hot tub water prior to any draining process which would release the water into natural swales or drainage ways.
- Control any erosion and prevent sediment from leaving your property and entering the storm drain system, taking extra care during do-it-yourself construction projects.
- Plant more shrubbery and trees on your property. This practice not only improves air quality but also improves water quality by absorbing storm water and reducing the rate of storm event runoff. Water your plants with water you have collected from your roof drains into a rain barrel.

Thank you for your help in keeping pollutants out of the storm water.

WEBSITE POLL

Visit the Town of La Plata's website at <http://www.townoflaplata.org> to participate in an online poll. Click on the 'Snap Poll' link on the left side of the web page to go to the poll and see the results to date. The current question is:

To what degree do you agree with the following statement - Improvements to La Plata's Downtown have been positive since implementing the Vision Plan in 2002. The Vision Plan should be updated to account for the changes since the tornado and new construction.

Police Service Priorities set for July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008

1. Enhance Community Policing/more high profile.
2. Public relations work with community.
3. Stepped up enforcement of safety on Rt. 6 – cars and walkers.
4. Review, enhance benefits in order to attract/be competitive.
5. Increase number of sworn officers as Town grows.
6. Establish formal metrics tracking and report on regular basis to Council.
7. Continue to review and upgrade technology: radio systems, computers, programs, systems, cameras.
8. Personnel system performance based.

Finance and Administrative Support Service Priorities set for July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008

1. Complete program to get radio read in place.
2. Wi-fi system in Town.
3. Permit tracking system similar to the County.
4. Consolidate online services: water, sewer, customer inquiries, permits.
5. Continue to provide good customer service.
6. Preauthorized debits for utility billing.
7. Summer intern program.

Community Development – Community Promotion Service Priorities set for July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008

1. Signature event that La Plata is known for.
2. Events coordinator.
3. “Old Town” signage for community events.
4. Welcome pack for residents/post-cards; baskets; meet councilperson.
5. Combine Veterans Day and Memorial Day with American Legion events; collaborate.
6. Explore becoming a member of Maryland Main Street Program.
7. Seasonal brochure of events.
8. Redesign web page to highlight amenities.
9. Keep promoting La Plata Business Association.
10. A room at Town Hall showing plats, boards, growth of La Plata.

Revenue Issues/Concerns

We do a lot with what we have despite revenue diversity and lack of fairness from your county and state representatives. Municipalities are equal forms of government in Maryland and should have equal taxing and revenue raising authority. THAT BEING SAID...

MUNICIPALITIES LACK REVENUE DIVERSITY

FACT: Maryland municipalities, more than any other form of government, rely on the property tax as their primary general fund revenue source.

FACT: Municipalities need to “diversify their portfolios” more closely emulating counties by obtaining additional revenue raising authority.

FACT: Municipalities cannot tax recordation of land transfer documents, property transfers, building improvements, utilities or hotel/motel room nights. Counties can!

FACT: 96% of state aid to local governments goes to counties versus 4% to municipalities (excluding K-12 education aid).

How will municipalities pay for new and expanded infrastructure and services?

FACT: The Department of Planning reports that Maryland’s population will increase by 1.5 million by 2025.

FACT: Federal base realignment will bring an estimated 60,000 new jobs to Maryland resulting in 25,000 families seeking high quality housing and community services within the next five to ten years.

FACT: Smart Growth principles call for all new growth in Maryland to be located in and around existing infrastructure like that found in municipalities.

In order to correct the inequity between county and municipal funding sources, Counties need to work with municipalities in revenue sharing that will benefit all residents.

Recordation/Transfer Taxes – Municipalities do not receive recordation taxes on properties transferred inside our own borders. In fiscal year 2007 recordation taxes going to county budgets are approximated at \$485 million, ZERO for Municipalities.

Recordation Tax Historical Background:

Prior to 1968, Maryland taxed banks based on the assessed value of the stock of the bank.

In 1968, the General Assembly enacted legislation to discontinue the Bank Shares Tax.

To compensate for this loss of revenues to local governments, the General Assembly:

Increased the State property tax grant **to counties only.**

Authorized counties to impose the recordation tax **at an unlimited rate where previously the rate had been capped.**

Required counties annually to hold municipal governments harmless for **\$300,000 per year** in lost Bank Shares Tax revenues.

Meanwhile, recordation taxes collected by **counties** have grown from **\$5.2 million to over \$600 million** as recently as FY 2006 – an **11,904% increase**, and we see none of these collected funds.

In summary, the Council will continue with the limited resources we have to ensure that La Plata is safe and the quality of life issues you deserve are maintained. The municipalities and towns will work with the Counties and State to try to correct these revenue inequities. Talk to your County and State representatives by requesting they change the way Recordation Fees are distributed. The Council would like your ideas and areas of concern, so please e-mail me, the Town Manager, or your Councilperson.

FEBRUARY 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4 Special trash pick-up day (Call by 4:00 p.m. Fri., 2/1 to schedule)	5 7:00 p.m., Planning Commission meeting	6 9:00 a.m., Design Review Board meeting 7:30 p.m., Crime Watch Council meeting	7	8	9 7:00 p.m., "Date Night" movie - <i>The Lake House</i>
10	11	12 6:00 p.m., Town Council facilitated session - budget priority setting	13 5:00 p.m., Parks and Recreation Commission meeting	14	15	16
17 Town Hall Closed (No change to trash schedule.)	18	19 7:00 p.m., Town Council work session	20 9:00 a.m., Design Review Board work session	21	22	23
24 5:00 p.m., Beautification Commission meeting (Rescheduled from 2/18)	25	26 7:00 p.m., Town Council regular meeting	27	28	29	

MARCH 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 Special trash pickup day (Call by 4:00 p.m. Fri., 2/29 to schedule)	3	4 4:00 p.m., Town Council meeting with County Commissioners 7:00 p.m., Planning Commission meeting	5 9:00 a.m., Design Review Board meeting 7:30 p.m., Crime Watch Council meeting	6	7	8
9	10	11 7:00 p.m., Town Council work session	12 5:00 p.m., Parks and Recreation Commission meeting	13	14	15 1:00 p.m., Easter Fun! event
16	17 5:00 p.m., Beautification Commission meeting	18 7:00 p.m., Town Council work session	19 9:00 a.m., Design Review Board work session	20	21 Town Hall Closed (No change to trash schedule.)	22
23/30	24/31	25 7:00 p.m., Town Council regular meeting	26	27	28	29

EMAIL ADDRESSES WANTED

Like many organizations, the Town of La Plata is working towards improving digital communications. The Town is committed to using technology to better serve and communicate with residents and businesses. As a result, the Town is beginning to compile a database of resident and business email addresses.

By providing the Town with your email address, the Town will be able to communicate with you in the future easily and inexpensively. Current methods the Town uses to communicate with residents are through the Town Notes newsletter, press releases, mailings, and telephone calls. Email communication will allow timely and cost effective communication with residents.

Information that can be done via email includes street repair updates, water main break information, special event updates, and notice of planning meetings in your area. The higher the participation, the more opportunities the Town will have to inform residents, quickly and efficiently.

If you would like to have your email address included in our database for future communication, please send your email address along with your name and street address to Carolyn Johnson at cjohnson@townoflaplata.org. Providing your email address to the Town is voluntary. The Town is simply seeking an additional means to be able to communicate with the community.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to the winners of the 2007 Christmas Decorations Contest, and thank you to all who decorated your homes and businesses.

Residential - Traditional

1st Place

Harry and Teresa Dugan
623 Clarks Run Road

Honorable Mentions

- Charlotte Hill
134 Dulles St.
- Melissa Walter
207 Persimmon Ct.

Residential - Whimsical

1st Place

Ralph Connatser
510 Scarlet Oak Road

Honorable Mentions

- William Yeckley
115 Mallard Lane
- Lois Turner
325 Jennie Run Drive

Commercial

1st Place

Optical Shoppe of La Plata
403 Charles Street

Honorable Mention

Joson Fine Jewelry & Home Boutique,
113B La Grange Avenue

NOW OPEN IN LA PLATA AND COMING SOON TO LA PLATA

[This information is current as of January 1, 2008, and correct to the best of our knowledge. For more information, please contact Carol Rollins, Development Coordinator, Town of La Plata, at crollins@townoflaplata.org or 301-934-8421, ext. 116.]

The following businesses were issued Building Permits and/or Commercial Occupancy Permits during November and December:

Amana Trattoria

6810 Crain Highway

Arizona Pizza

105 Centennial Street

Carmike Kitchens

9405-B Chesapeake Street

Charles County Board of Elections

201 Charles Street

Giant

200 Rosewick Road

GP Homes

111 La Grange Avenue
Suite 202

La Plata Nutrition, "The Daily Shake"

403 Charles Street, Suite 2BB

Mixed-Use Building (commercial space and residential condos)

11 South Maple Avenue

Sally Beauty Supply

58 Shining Willow Way

The Curved Closet

9375 Chesapeake Street, Suite 115

Wachovia

100 Rosewick Road

AND A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL...

The Town Council, the Charles County Commissioners, choir members from Covenant Point United Methodist Church, and other guests joined to "Sing in the Season" during a celebration of holiday songs at the Town's **Olde Tyme Holiday Gathering** at the Town Hall on December 2.



Children were delighted to have **Breakfast with Santa** on December 8, and to let Santa know what they hoped he'd bring them for Christmas!



Mason Williams



Delanie Williams



Evan Perkins

SPECIAL EVENTS

Date Night!

Saturday, February 9, 7:00 p.m.

La Plata Town Hall – Council Chambers

Adult couples are invited to come out for a FREE MOVIE on Saturday, February 9, 7:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers of the La Plata Town Hall. Bring a blanket, pillow, and snacks and enjoy a quaint evening.

Showing: *The Lake House*, rated PG, 105 minutes

A lonely doctor who once occupied an unusual lakeside home begins exchanging love letters with its newest resident, an architecture school dropout. Even though the two lived there several years apart, the letters seem to bridge time in this mysterious romance. Starring Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock.

Space is limited to twenty-five (25) couples, 18 years of age and older. Please reserve your space by email at mminer@townofla-plata.org or 301-934-8421.

Easter Fun!

Saturday, March 15, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Inside La Plata Town Hall

Create your own Ice Cream Sundae to eat with the Easter Bunny, and when you are full, enjoy making a variety of Easter crafts to keep or share.

Town Hall Closed

The Town Hall will be closed on the following days:

Monday, February 18, 2008
Friday, March 21, 2008

If you have a **water or sewer emergency** after hours, call 301-934-8421 and follow the instructions given to report your emergency. The automated response system will alert the appropriate department to respond to you.

TOWN OF LA PLATA OFFICIALS

Mayor: Gene Ambrogio

Council:

Jim Goldsmith Ward 1
Scot D. Lucas Ward 2
Paddy Mudd Ward 3
Vic E. Newman Ward 4

Town Manager:

Daniel J. Mears

Assistant Town Manager:

Michelle D. Miner

Town Clerk: Judith T. Frazier

Treasurer: Joseph W. Norris

Project Manager: Steven F. Schroeder

Director of Planning and Zoning:

Catherine N. Flerlage

Director of Public Works:

Stephen A. Murphy

Police Chief: Cassin B. Gittings

305 Queen Anne Street,

La Plata, Maryland 20646

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Telephone: 301-934-8421 / 301-870-3377

La Plata Police Department: 301-934-1500

Email: mminer@townoflaplata.org

Website: www.townoflaplata.org

LA PLATA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Featured Business

Bernie's Frame Shop – Celebrating 30 Years



Since 1978, Bernie's Frame Shop has been providing quality custom picture framing to La Plata and the surrounding Southern Maryland area. We would like to take a moment to thank all of our wonderful patrons. It has been a joy to enhance and preserve art and memorabilia for our customers. We're looking forward to another 30 years.

Town Notes is a publication of the Town of La Plata. If you would like to submit a Community Announcement item (subject to Town approval and space availability), please send it by e-mail to frazier@townoflaplata.org.

TOWN OF LA PLATA

305 Queen Anne Street

P. O. Box 2268

La Plata, Maryland 20646-2268

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