

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Joint work session with County Commissioners
October 17, 2006, 4:00 PM

Present: Town of La Plata
Mayor Gene Ambrogio, Councilmen R. Wayne Winkler, C. Keith Back, Paretta D. Mudd, and Vic E. Newman; Michelle D. Miner, Interim Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk; Joseph W. Norris, Town Treasurer

Charles County
Commissioner President Wayne Cooper, Commissioners Candice Quinn Kelly, Edith J. Patterson and Allan R. Smith; Roy Hancock, Interim County Administrator; Denise Ferguson, Clerk; Captain Mike Wyant, Chuck Beall, Jason Groth, Mike Mudd, David Eicholz

Minutes:

Mayor Ambrogio called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

Joint meeting with the County Commissioners

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

Charles County Sheriff/Town of La Plata Police retreat

Description: Set date and location for retreat in January, 2007.

Following a brief discussion of dates and location proposed, it was agreed to tentatively schedule the retreat on January 24-25, 2007, at Harry Lundenberg School in Piney Point, with confirmation to be made after Chief Gittings and Sheriff Davis confer. Plans are to be finalized after the general election.

Washington Avenue Park and Ride facility

The Town Council and County Commissioners agreed to work together regarding the issues of maintenance, snow removal, landscaping and utilities, and to have Town and County staff work together regarding the Maryland Transit Authority Memorandum of Understanding. Town staff: Michelle Miner, Steve Murphy, and Councilman Winkler. County staff: Mike Mudd, Jason Groth and Commissioner Kelly. Mr. Hancock will notify MTA.

Project update: Courthouse expansion; Talbot Street

Mr. Mudd provided an update on these projects. Regarding Talbot Street, Mr. Mudd advised that they are working to obtain a crossover on Crain Highway and that there will not be a traffic signal. Regarding the Courthouse expansion, Mr. Mudd displayed building elevations and advised that the project is on schedule and is estimated to begin in early spring of 2007, and that construction will take two years. Councilwoman Mudd asked if was possible to underground utilities. Mr. Mudd advised he would have to research whether that is possible.

In response to Councilwoman Mudd's question about the renaming of Rosewick Road to St. Charles Parkway, Mr. Beall advised that a request has been sent to Department of Emergency Services to determine if the name can remain Rosewick Road.

Tax cap for senior citizens

Mayor Ambrogio noted that the Town has received letters from citizens requesting a cap on real estate taxes and asked if this was something the County will consider. The Commissioners agreed this is a priority and directed Mr. Eicholz to research options for a tax cap for senior citizens. Councilman Winkler noted he would like the County and the Towns of La Plata and Indian Head to work together on this issue.

Transportation Study update

Mr. Groth provided an update on the Transportation Study, noting that three proposals were received and that it is recommended that the Town select the proposal from the RBA Group. Regarding cost-sharing, the County stated they were providing technical assistance for the project.

Washington Avenue sidewalk project

Mr. Groth noted that they will be looking into the possibility of including sidewalks as part of the Transportation Study.

2007 County Commissioners/Town Council proposed quarterly meeting schedule:

Tuesday, January 23, 2007 (Charles County Government Building)
Tuesday, April 17, 2007 (La Plata Town Hall)
Tuesday, July 10, 2007 (Charles County Government Building)
Tuesday, October 16, 2007 (La Plata Town Hall)

The Town and the County agreed to the proposed meeting schedule, and agreed to combine the January meeting with the proposed retreat to be held January 24 and 25.

Other business

Mayor Ambrogio announced that Joe Norris would be Acting Town Manager effective November 1.

Councilman Newman asked the Commissioners to consider the issue of school children who reside outside of Charles County but are attending Charles County schools, noting that apparently school principals are allowed to approve this. Councilman Newman suggested that it would reduce class size if this was not allowed. Commissioner President Cooper stated that school principals may make a decision regarding district-to-district within Charles County, and that out of county residents pay tuition to attend a Charles County school. Councilwoman Mudd suggested that Keith Grier of the Charles County Board of Education was the person to whom this question should be addressed.

Councilman Winkler reported that the Town will be hiring another police officer before the end of this year, bringing the department total to thirteen.

Commissioner Kelly asked the Town about the recent sewer spill and suggested that an emergency plan be in place between now and when the Town's infrastructure upgrade project is complete. She also recommended that consideration be given to providing sewage pumping trucks to help alleviate the problem during any future spills. Mr. Norris advised he would research if a sewage pumping truck could remove any appreciable volume during such an event. Councilman Winkler advised that the Town is working to create a water and sewer advisory committee, with Bill Eckman and other knowledge-based citizens as members, to work towards resolving the water and sewer issues in the Town.

Following a short break held after the conclusion (5:42 PM) of the quarterly joint work session with the County Commissioners, Mayor Ambrogio **reconvened the work session at 6:06 PM.**

Matters of Council Discussion

La Grange Avenue parking spaces

Description: Dr. Ferrero and other interested parties wish to discuss parking spaces on La Grange Avenue.

Dr. Ferrero, Cal Weirich, Dick Mudd and Oscar Lease were present to discuss creating parking spaces on La Grange Avenue in front of their building.

Council consensus: The Council asked Ms. Miner to ask Greg Welker/SHA to meet with the Town to discuss this. Ms. Miner advised she would report back at the October 24 work session. Councilman Winkler advised he would speak to State officials at the MML fall conference. Ms. Miner will have Steve Schroeder look at the area.

Fee in lieu of parkland dedication or reservation

Description: Councilman Newman wishes to discuss to whom and when this fee in lieu is applied. Discussion will include providing for a combination of payment of a fee and dedication or reservation or parkland.

Councilman Newman proposed making it mandatory that all developments and apartments be required to pay fees in lieu, and suggested that consideration be given to reducing the \$7500 fee and providing for a 2-tier system for houses and apartments.

Council consensus: The Council agreed that Mr. Norris is to discuss with Mr. Sussman a draft ordinance which would require apartment developments to pay fees in lieu.

Water and Sewer Commission

Description: The Council will discuss creation of a Water and Sewer Commission.

Following discussion, the Council agreed to form an advisory board until a commission can be created by ordinance.

Ordinance 06-22 Regulation of Smoking and Tobacco Products – Private Clubs

Description: The Council will discuss issues raised at the October 10 meeting.

Mayor Ambrogio advised that Mr. Sussman is researching how other jurisdictions handle private clubs. The Council agreed to postpone discussion until that information is provided.

Matters of Information

Ms. Miner reported that 45 scarecrows have been sold to date for the October 28 Scarecrow Festival.

The Council agreed that Ms. Miner and Mr. Norris are to ask Mr. Eckman to intervene in the matter of dealing with CSX for the railroad crossing for Heritage Green. Mayor Ambrogio noted he also would speak to Mr. Eckman, noting he wanted to know the status of the previous contact with CSX.

Ms. Miner acknowledged receipt of a letter from Louis D. Grasso, dated October 6, 2006, regarding the status of development of the Grasso annexation property. The deadline for completion of the manor house is one year from the effective date of the annexation, which was October 7, 2005. The Town Council agreed to have Mr. Sussman write a letter to Mr. Grasso reminding him of the terms of the annexation agreement.

Councilman Newman asked why the scheduling of the Town Clock dedication event was not brought before the Council prior to setting a date. It was noted there had been a breakdown of communication. Councilman Winkler advised he will represent the Council at the event.

Councilwoman Mudd asked if Town staff could get estimates for Council approval to have the Town Hall lawn and drainage work done. Ms. Miner noted that Denison sent their staff engineer to look at the site but the Town has not yet received an estimate.

Ms. Miner reported that she has not been able to get a guest speaker or an organization to cook and serve hot dogs for the Salute to Veterans event. Councilman Back agreed to find the guest speaker.

There being no other discussion, Councilman Back moved to adjourn at 7:24 PM. Councilman Winkler seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Submitted by:

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk