

Mayor and Council Meeting
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
April 9, 2002, 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor William F. Eckman, Councilman Wayne Winkler, Councilman Thomas W. Fritz, Councilman Gene Ambrogio, Councilman Roy G. Hale; Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager; Patricia L. Bembe, Assistant Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier

Guests: (See attached roster)

Minutes:

Mayor Eckman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of February 26 and March minutes

Councilman Hale made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 26 closed session. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 12 meeting. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Hale made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 26 meeting. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Proclamation of April and May, 2002 as "The 2002 Maryland Chiefs' Challenge Months - Mayor Eckman read the proclamation into the record and presented it to Chief Gittings, La Plata Police Department.

Legislation

Ord. 02-12 2002 Comprehensive Plan (For Adoption) - For the purpose of adopting a new comprehensive plan for the Town of La Plata; and all matters relating to said plan.

Mr. Miller explained that a land issue on St. Mary's Avenue had not been forwarded from the Vision Implementation Team to the Planning Commission, who would discuss it at a work session scheduled to be held on April 16. Mr. Miller recommended adoption of the Plan be done at the May 14 meeting.

Following a brief discussion, Councilman Winkler offered a motion that action on the Comprehensive Plan be postponed until the May 14 meeting. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Unfinished Business

Council Reports

Councilman Winkler reported on the caboose restoration project, noting that the meeting held last Saturday produced 20 volunteers and a decision to restore the caboose to the standard as it was originally provided to the Navy in the 1940's. The decision was based on the caboose being one of only ten cabooses designed for the Navy. The lead base paint issue is being researched prior to beginning the restoration project. Following a remark that they would be seeking help from the Navy, Councilman Fritz offered to help identify the proper person to contact in the Navy. Councilman Winkler also advised that it was hoped that this week Joe Husick would move the caboose off the siding and onto the Town's tracks.

Councilman Ambrogio asked Joe Harrison, Chairman of the Beautification Commission, to report on recent activities. Mr. Harrison explained that there has been a change of plans regarding the wrought iron brackets on Charles Street. The Commission is currently considering installing street lamps similar to those on Centennial Street, which also have brackets for banners and flower baskets. Mayor Eckman questioned whether the State Highway Administration (SHA) would allow cutting into their new sidewalk. Mr. Harrison also reported that their summer projects also included more planter boxes. In response to Councilman Hale, Mr. Harrison advised that they have not been able to come to any agreement regarding a design for the proposed information sign near WaWa, which Councilman Hale described as having an electronic message board and wired so that changes may be made to it from Town Hall. It was remarked that Councilman Hilleary had been working with Kenny Signs on this project. Councilman Winkler agreed he would contact Kenny Signs to get a picture of a prototype.

In response to Mayor Eckman's question, Mr. Miller advised he would follow up on the Town's discussions with SHA regarding installing new sockets for our flags along Charles Street.

Councilman Fritz reported that Captain Livingstone, head of the ROTC at La Plata High School, has agreed to be our guest speaker at the Memorial Day ceremony. Councilman Fritz also reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission is continuing to hold meetings as part of the process of selecting a design for the proposed park at the Town lake. They will be looking at all parks in the Town.

Councilman Hale reported on the Planning Commission's work on the Comprehensive Plan, which they decided should mirror the Vision Plan rather than incorporate it in its entirety. Councilman Hale also reported on the Commission's recommendation that the Town Council modify the subdivision regulations to allow Wales Drive to exceed the maximum length for a cul-de-sac rather than require the ravine crossing. Councilman Hale reported that the Commission's discussion of the requested MUD residential and commercial uses for Agricopia resulted in a split vote and would be discussed at a work session on April 16. He also reported that the Commission was asked by Steeplechase representatives to allow lot sizes to be 5000 square feet. The Commission felt that was too small, preferring that lot sizes be 8000 square feet minimum. Mayor Eckman remarked that their plans for MUD on that property do not really reflect mixed use as they

are planning all single family homes, and noted that there should be some kind of minimum incorporated to require a real mixed use.

Mayor Eckman reported on the Vision Implementation Team's (VIT) work. Due to the high cost quoted by Verizon (\$98,000) to move 4 poles and put the service underground, that will not be included in the St. Mary's Avenue upgrade project. The Town is looking at property acquisition for the new Talbot Street project and will be meeting with the County on April 17 on their project, and then will be meeting with CSX that afternoon regarding the railroad crossing. Mayor Eckman also reported that the VIT was working on first drafts of standards for a Design Review Board and architectural standards. The Town Council will see a draft at their next work session. After the Town Attorney reviews them, they will be reviewed by the Planning Commission. Following a public hearing, it is hoped that adoption will occur in June.

New Business

Budget Amendment - Water Tower

Mr. Miller referred to the March 26, 2002 letter from Maryland Environmental Service (MES) [copy provided to Mayor and Council], which advised the estimated cost for sandblasting, recoating and collection and disposal of debris for the water tower is \$228,000. Mr. Miller asked the Town Council to authorize a budget amendment in that amount so he can proceed with the project. He explained that he was representing to the Mayor and Council at this time that he hoped to take the \$228,000 from unexpended funds in the FY02 operating water budget and fund balance. Mayor Eckman remarked he believed it was premature to make a budget amendment before the job is bid, noting he felt it would be better to authorize bidding the job to get a firm price and then authorize the budget amendment, and pointed out that MES mentions bidding the job first in their letter.

Following this discussion, Councilman Fritz offered a motion to authorize MES to go to bid, and then make the budget amendment. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Communications Equipment - Water Tower

Mr. Miller displayed pictures showing AT&T's proposed antenna on the rail of the water tower by the old firehouse. The Mayor and Council agreed to authorize Mr. Miller to negotiate this with AT&T. Mr. Miller will get comparable rates from other Towns and have the Town Attorney review a lease.

Water Restrictions

Mr. Miller advised that last Friday the governor banned outdoor water use in the City of Rockville and central Maryland, and declared they are under a drought emergency. The rest of Maryland is under a drought warning. The governor has asked that all Maryland residents reduce water consumption by 10%.

Mayor Eckman asked Mr. Miller to identify buildings in La Plata which are not metered in order to have meters installed so the Town can do a water audit.

Modification of Subdivision Regulations

Mr. Miller explained the issue before the Planning Commission regarding King's Grant Sections 6 and 7: connecting Wales Drive by way of a ravine crossing or asking the Town Council to modify the subdivision regulations to allow Wales Drive to be a cul-de-sac in excess of the 800' maximum. The Planning Commission was asked to eliminate the crossing due to environmental issues. The Commission sees a greater good in having Wales Drive end in a cul-de-sac than crossing the ravine, which would require the stripping of soils elsewhere in another section of King's Grant, and is asking the Town Council to consider a modification to the subdivision regulations on the basis of the unique environmental situation. If the Council approves a modification, the Planning Commission would then be able to approve their plat.

Prior to making a motion on this, Councilman Fritz expressed his appreciation of the Planning Commission's handling of this request, and noted that many residents of King's Grant spoke at the Planning Commission meeting. Mayor Eckman questioned whether the motion should include a description of the trees which the developers are to leave in place. Councilman Fritz and Mr. Miller noted they met with the developers, who know to leave the trees there. Councilman Fritz offered a motion to modify the subdivision regulations to allow Wales Drive to end in a cul-de-sac in excess of the 800' maximum. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Ambrogio recognized Rick Baldus' presence, and advised he had prepared a packet of information for the Town Council dealing with pedestrian crosswalks, which Councilman Ambrogio suggested be included in the engineering for St. Mary's Avenue and Talbot Street. Mayor Eckman agreed and noted that Mr. Baldus had been a faithful attendee at VIT meetings.

Public Forum

James Hoffman, 206 Washington Avenue, shared a letter and picture of his house (approximate date 1912) with those present. The letter, dated April 5, 2002, from Joseph Rowe to John Wearmouth, described some of the history of Mr. Hoffman's house, which Mr. Rowe said had La Plata's first telephone switchboard in its front room. Mr. Hoffman said he thought the Historical Society might be interested in his house and its history.

Pat Howe, Shining Willow Way, advised he is a member of the Sacred Heart Church council, and asked the Town Council to consider extending the St. Mary's Avenue sidewalk to join the sidewalk at the funeral home. He explained that there is shared parking between the funeral home and the church, and that portions of the sidewalk in front of the church and Mrs. Arehart's property are underwater, causing people to have to walk in the street. Mayor Eckman responded that the Town plans to do as much as it is possible to do with the money available for the project.

Paula Winkler offered clarification on remarks made earlier by Mr. Harrison regarding the street lamps on Charles Street. Ms. Winkler indicated that the intention of the Beautification Commission is to remove the cobra-style lights to lower the lighting and give more of a village effect.

Mayor Eckman agreed this would be a good idea, but pointed out we would need to get the State of Maryland to do the work as it is very expensive. A brief discussion was held regarding funding sources.

Councilman Winkler responded to Mr. Hoffman's earlier remarks about his house. He noted he is president of the Historical Society and had been involved when the County offered the Somers house to anyone who could move it from the lot. Councilman Winkler thought it would be nice if Mr. Hoffman's house could be moved.

Commenting on the proclamation for The 2002 Maryland Chiefs' Challenge Months, Councilman Winkler advised that he teaches the AARP 55 Drive Alive course, which is offered at local senior centers and at Civista. He said the course is 8 hours long, the fee is \$10.00, and could result in receiving a discount on your Geico or AARP automobile insurance. He encouraged those interested to call Civista or one of the senior centers.

Councilman Hale remarked that he noticed that Facchina employees were sweeping the gravel off the street today, and were parking in their lot. Mr. Harrison advised that they were parked on the street when he drove past there today.

There being no further business, Councilman Hale made a motion to adjourn at 8:05 PM. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier