

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
March 25, 2003, 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, Town Clerk

Guests: (See attached roster)

Minutes:

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

Treasurer's Report

Mayor Eckman acknowledged receipt of the Treasurer's Report dated February 28, 2003.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Paula Winkler - donation to Treescape Restoration Project

Paula Winkler, who serves as President of the Charles County Garden Club, as a member of the Town's Beautification Commission, and as co-chairman of the La Plata Treescape Restoration Committee, presented a donation in the amount of \$15,000.00 from the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, Inc. to the La Plata Treescape Restoration Committee. Mrs. Winkler explained that the donation was possible due to an application by Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, Inc. to the Natural Disasters-U.S.A. Fund program conducted by the National Garden Clubs, Inc., and will be used by the La Plata Treescape Restoration Committee to purchase some large trees.

Mrs. Winkler presented an enlargement of a photograph of the tornado-damaged water tower, which she noted was suitable for framing and may be displayed at the Train Station.

Mayor Eckman advised that the Town was expecting a \$10,000.00 donation from the Maryland Mayors group, which will be used for replacing trees.

In response to Councilman Hale's question regarding how residents could get on a list for replacement of trees in front yards, Mrs. Winkler advised that he should have them call her. In response to Councilman Winkler's question regarding where the trees are being planted, Mrs. Winkler advised that they will be used to repair tornado-damaged areas in Morgan's Ridge, near the wastewater treatment plant, and as part of the replacement project on Wicomico Street, Worcester Street, and Hemlock Court.

Mayor Eckman offered the Town's appreciation to Paula Winkler and to her co-chairman, Mark Rose, for their efforts on the Town's Treescape Restoration Committee.

Harlan Lang - fund raising efforts for Disaster Relief Fund

Mr. Lang displayed new and original versions of items he is selling to raise money for the Disaster Relief Fund. The new items include zip front jackets, children's shirts, and "Celebrate La Plata" shirts. Mr. Lang presented another donation in the amount of \$200.00. In response to Councilman Winkler's request, Mr. Lang agreed to sell t-shirts at the Town's Friday evening concerts.

Mayor Eckman offered the Town's appreciation to Mr. Lang for his fund raising efforts for the Disaster Relief Fund.

Proclamation of April and May, 2003 as "The 2003 Maryland Chiefs' Challenge Months" - Mayor Eckman read the proclamation into the record and presented it to Chief Gittings, La Plata Police Department.

Unfinished Business

Council Reports

Councilman Hale reported on some of the events planned for the "Celebrate La Plata" Spring Festival to be held April 25 through April 28.

Councilman Fritz reported that Town Public Works crews would be performing maintenance tasks at the parks in the Town within the next six weeks.

Councilman Ambrogio reported that the Kent Avenue Revitalization Committee met last week and finalized plans for the community clean-up day which was held March 22. He advised that the Town and County supported the community's efforts by providing special pick-ups of bulk items and debris clean-up. The next community clean-up day is scheduled for March 29. Another event is planned for April 12, for which they are asking help from outside communities for landscaping and mulching projects. Mayor Eckman praised Councilman Ambrogio and the community for doing a great job at the March 22 clean-up day.

Councilman Ambrogio reported that the Beautification Commission met two weeks ago and asked Joe Harrison to report on that meeting. Mr. Harrison advised that the Beautification Commission was unanimous in their vote to get started on replacing the Town's star, which they believe should be reinstalled at its former location off Calvert Street. He also reported that more street Christmas decorations have been ordered: 20 snowflakes and 21 wreaths for lamp posts on Centennial Street. Mr. Harrison reported that the State of Maryland has offered to help with money for construction and installation of the poles with brackets for planters and banners along Charles Street, and noted that he needed to contact Indian Head Ironworks to have 40 made.

Councilman Winkler reported that the La Plata Business Association met on March 13, and discussed what to put on the banners for the poles that are proposed to be installed along Charles Street. He also reported that the Historic District Commission met and discussed obtaining plaques

to mark houses in the historic district, placing signs to mark where the historic district begins and ends, noted that two properties on Washington Avenue may be asking for historic district status, and discussed possible incentives the Town could offer. Mayor Eckman and Councilman Winkler briefly discussed the state's tax incentive program and Councilman Winkler advised that Scott Whipple would be attending the next meeting to discuss this program.

Mayor Eckman reported that the roof on the old post office building is being repaired, and a meeting is planned for next week with the architect to discuss renovating the building for the police department and community center. Councilman Winkler remarked that he was working with Cheryl McGuire on a sign for the new police department and community center building.

Mayor Eckman reported that the Design Review Board is almost finished with work on design guidelines for the C-H Commercial Highway District. He noted that the sign regulations would be separate from the design guidelines.

McPhee (Martin) Annexation Agreement

Mr. Miller briefly described the agreement and noted that it needed to be adopted prior to adoption of the annexation resolution.

Councilman Hale offered a motion to approve the annexation agreement for the following reasons: (1) The annexation will fill in an enclave in that area; (2) The annexation will provide medium range price housing; (3) The annexation will provide a sewer line for dwellings without Town sewer along Oak Avenue; and (4) The annexation will provide needed sidewalks and will upgrade that area of Town. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion.

In discussion prior to the vote, Councilman Ambrogio asked that the Council either delay the vote or vote nay. Councilman Ambrogio read for the record a statement, "The McPhee/Martin Annexation Agreement" dated March 25, 2003 [copy attached to these minutes], in which he explained his objection to entering into the agreement was based on the uncertainty that truly moderate priced houses will be built in the subdivision. Following a brief discussion of Councilman Ambrogio's statement, a vote was taken on the motion: Mayor Eckman and Councilmen Winkler, Fritz and Hale voted aye; Councilman Ambrogio voted nay. The motion carried by majority vote.

Legislation

Resolution 02-3 McPhee Annexation - 23.62 Acres (For Adoption) - For the purpose of authorizing the annexation of 23.62 acres, more or less, of contiguous land into the corporate limits of the Town of La Plata by amending the corporate limits of the Town; establishing certain terms, conditions and circumstances applicable to such land and to the owners thereof; providing for the zoning of such land upon annexation; and all matters relating to the annexation of such 23.62 acres of land, more or less, into the Town of La Plata.

Councilman Hale offered a motion to adopt Resolution 02-3. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion.

In discussion prior to the vote, Councilman Ambrogio read for the record a statement, "Resolution 02-3 McPhee Annexation" dated March 25, 2003 [copy attached to these minutes], in which he explained his objection to adopting Resolution 02-3, and asked the Town Council to vote against the resolution. Following a brief discussion of Councilman Ambrogio's statement, a vote was taken on the motion: Mayor Eckman and Councilmen Winkler, Fritz and Hale voted aye; Councilman Ambrogio voted nay. The motion carried by majority vote.

New Business

Design Review Board funding recommendations

Three funding recommendations were forwarded by the Design Review Board to the Mayor and Council:

Henry D. DiLorenzo, DDS, 113 La Grange Avenue, \$25,000: Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the payment of \$25,000. Councilman Hale seconded the motion. In discussion prior to the vote, a point was raised regarding resolving any potential parking problem prior to issuing the incentive funding. Mayor Eckman and Mr. Miller provided clarification that the money is not issued until construction begins and that a building permit for construction can't be issued until parking requirements are met or varied. Councilman Hale offered an amendment to the motion that the parking problem be resolved before issuing funding. Councilman Winkler seconded. Mayor Eckman called for a vote on the motion to verify that the parking problems are resolved and it passed by unanimous vote. Mayor Eckman called for a vote on the motion to award the \$25,000 incentive funding and it passed by unanimous vote.

James A. Mudd, 7 Maple Avenue, \$13,000: Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the payment of \$13,000. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion. In discussion prior to the vote, Councilman Hale questioned why the amount was only \$13,000. Cheryl McGuire, Chairman of the Design Review Board, advised that the amount reflected the expenses presented to date by Mr. Mudd, and noted he may return to the Board to request more. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

KNS Associates, 11 Maple Avenue, \$25,000: Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the payment of \$25,000. Councilman Hale seconded the motion. In discussion prior to the vote, Councilman Winkler questioned the use by KNS Associates of the funding. Ms. McGuire advised that incentive funding is only awarded for relocation of pads and parking. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

In response to Councilman Winkler's question, Ms. McGuire and Mr. Miller advised that the Design Review Board is working on a new process for reviewing these projects. Mayor Eckman noted for the record that the money is part of a grant to the Town from the State of Maryland for recovery from the tornado. He also pointed out that the Design Review Board requires documentation, and reviews the plans and the costs of relocating the pad and parking. Ms. McGuire pointed out that most of the applicants to date have documented expenses over \$25,000 but the Design Review Board set the funding award limit at \$25,000.

Councilman Hale remarked that, with the war ongoing in Iraq, he felt it would be appropriate to fly the American flags along Charles Street at least one day a week to recognize our troops overseas until such time as that battle is over. The Town Council and members of the audience were in support of flying the flags every day until it's over. Councilman Winkler also pointed out that people in many towns across the country are putting one light in a window, such as the lights used at Christmas, for the same reason.

Public Forum

Harlan Lang remarked that people are asking him about where the money he is raising is being spent. Councilman Winkler provided a brief explanation of how the Charles County Disaster Relief Fund and La Plata Disaster Relief Fund money is awarded as grants to residents who have applied. This grant process for residents will close at the end of April, after which the applications will be reviewed again and may possibly receive another grant.

Mr. Lang also remarked that people are asking him what will happen at the La Plata Shopping Center after CVS and Safeway relocate, and what is happening with the Davis development. Councilman Winkler remarked that the Town needs a telecommuter (and daycare) space, which he felt would be a good use at the space being vacated by Safeway. Mayor Eckman explained that the Town received a federal grant (Rural Business Opportunity Grant) and hired a consultant, Chris Jakubiak, who has established a steering committee consisting of five people from La Plata's downtown business community, and they have been meeting regularly. An update of Mr. Jakubiak's market study has been completed and some preliminary work has been done on a downtown development plan. An outgrowth of this work has been the reorganization of the La Plata Business Association. Mayor Eckman also remarked that the "Celebrate La Plata" festival is not only an observance of the anniversary of the tornado but is also a celebration of the Town building back, and will be the first of promotions planned for our downtown.

Regarding the Davis development, Mayor Eckman remarked that the provisions in the annexation agreement for a golf course, school site, roads, etc., are still in effect as they are an indenture on the land.

A member of the audience thanked Councilman Ambrogio for trying to preserve La Plata as it is.

Cheryl McGuire thanked Councilman Winkler for having the street lights repaired in Quailwood. Councilman Winkler remarked that another request from Quailwood was in regards to cleaning up the lot next to ANS. He advised he had spoken to the real estate person representing the owners of that lot, which he said is getting ready to be sold and will be cleaned up.

There being no further business, Councilman Hale made a motion to adjourn at 8:12 PM. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk