

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Regular Meeting
December 23, 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; Carol L. Rollins

Town staff: Cassin B. Gittings, Chief, La Plata Police Department, Joseph W. Norris, Town Treasurer

Guests: (see 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 November 30, 2003.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances (none)

Legislation

Ordinance 03-18 Hospitals as Permitted Uses in the C-B Central Business District (For Introduction) – For the purpose of including Hospitals as a permitted use in the C-B Central Business District zone; specifying the required off-street parking spaces for such use in the C-B Central Business District zone; and all matters generally relating to said use and off-street parking requirements.

Mr. Miller gave a brief explanation of Ordinance 03-18. The Town Code lists hospitals as a permitted use in the P-L Public Lands District, but does not currently list hospitals as a permitted use in the C-B Central Business District zone. Civista Medical Center will be purchasing the Town Hall property at 5 Garrett Avenue which is zoned C-B. The hospital property at 701 Charles Street is zoned P-L Public Lands District.

Mayor Eckman questioned when the rezoning of the Garrett Avenue property would take place. Mr. Miller explained that the zoning would not change until the Comprehensive Plan is revised.

Ordinance 03-19 Traditional Neighborhood Development (For Introduction) – For the purpose of creating Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) as an overlay zone within the

Mixed Use District; specifying criteria and regulations for TND, defining certain terms; and all matters generally relating thereto.

Mr. Miller gave a brief explanation of Ordinance 03-19. Mr. Miller noted that TND would allow for a denser, urban style of development as an overlay zone. When questioned by Mayor Eckman, Mr. Miller stated that the TND would only apply to the Mixed Use District. Councilman Hale asked the source of the language for the proposed ordinance. Mr. Miller noted that the two primary sources were the Maryland Office of Planning and a developer's model.

Unfinished Business

Council Reports

Councilman Winkler reported that the Business Association has been quiet and busy with the Christmas season. The Historic District Commission is meeting as needed, but no petitions have been filed recently.

Councilman Ambrogio reported that the Kent Avenue Revitalization Committee had a holiday decorations contest for the community last week. He encouraged the Town residents to view the decorations in the neighborhood. Fourteen homes were registered for the contest, and prizes were awarded. The Beautification Commission judged decorations throughout the Town on Monday, December 22, 2003. Paula Winkler, Chairman, will report on that contest at the January Council meeting.

Councilman Fritz reported that the next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission will be on January 14, 2004.

Councilman Hale reported that the Planning Commission met on December 2, 2003, and their next meeting will be on January 6, 2004. He stated that the Town looks nice with the Christmas decorations. Clarks Run Subdivision will be putting out luminaries on Christmas Eve. Mayor Eckman noted that Quailwood also puts out luminaries on Christmas Eve.

Councilman Winkler reported that Gragan & Sons repaired the windows in the train caboose today, so that it will be protected from bad weather.

Mayor Eckman reported that the State Highway Administration (SHA) is preparing to advertise the La Grange Avenue/Centennial Street extension project in January 2004. Right-of-ways are being obtained now, and hopefully the project will begin in the spring.

Councilman Fritz announced that the January 2004 issue of The Washingtonian has The Crossing at Casey Jones listed as one of the top 100 restaurants in the DC Metro area. This is the sixth year that Paul and Lisa Bales' restaurant has been listed in the magazine.

Councilman Hale noted that Rick Baldus was present in the audience and commended him for his great decorations. The Maryland Independent listed the Baldus home on Washington Avenue as one to visit for viewing Christmas decorations.

Appropriation of Funds for Alarm Sirens

Mr. Miller asked that the Town Council take action on a discussion from an earlier meeting regarding funds needed to acquire alarm sirens for the Town of La Plata. Councilman Winkler made a motion to appropriate an additional sum of \$11,136.00 from the General Fund to augment the Disaster Relief Fund to pay for alarm sirens. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote. Councilman Winkler noted that within a year the entire Town of La Plata will be covered by sirens.

New Business

RFP – New Town Hall

Mr. Miller explained that the Town Hall needs to be vacated due to the Civista expansion. An RFP was put out for a design-build project in a very compressed time frame. Mr. Miller reported that four bids were received for the new Town Hall project, however, one bid was disqualified. Three firms were interviewed – Rainbow Construction, CMI and Facchina Group. Mr. Miller thanked the companies that responded to the request for proposals and commended them for their different approaches. Based on the proposals, presentation and final analysis, Mr. Miller recommended that the Facchina Group be selected to build the new Town Hall.

Councilman Fritz made a motion to enter into contract negotiations with the Facchina Group for construction of the new Town Hall. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Mayor Eckman noted that representatives from Rainbow Construction were present at the meeting and thanked them for their excellent proposal. Councilman Fritz stated that the Town would be requesting proposals for renovations to the future Police Department and Community Center on La Grange Avenue within the next few months, and he encouraged Rainbow to submit a proposal for that project. Councilman Hale stated his appreciation for Rainbow's interest in the Town's project.

Building Committee established for Town Hall project

Mr. Miller suggested that a building committee be established to oversee the Town Hall project. The committee will be the Town's liaison with the Facchina Group regarding the details of the project. Mr. Miller recommended that he, two Councilmen, Mr. Norris, Treasurer, and Mr. Thompson, Planning Commission member, be chosen as committee members based on their backgrounds, and experience with building and financial matters. Mayor Eckman stated that he would like to serve on the committee as a member. The Mayor suggested that Councilman Fritz should be chosen because of his experience on the Finance Committee.

Councilman Hale made a motion to establish a Building Committee consisting of Joseph Norris, Robert Thompson, Douglas Miller, Mayor Eckman, and Councilman Fritz. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Police Department and Community Center

Chief Gittings reported that the Town of La Plata Police Department has been approved for a grant of approximately \$415,000 from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The grant funds will be used for the hardening of the building on La Grange Avenue. Chief Gittings noted that the Design Review Board had approved the building elevations with minor modifications on December 17, 2003. Next, the plans are going to be reviewed by the law enforcement consultant in Florida. The architect, Mike Pellegrino, is developing the final plans for the building.

Mayor Eckman requested that the Council be provided with copies of the final building plans as soon as possible. Chief Gittings responded that the building design is the same as presented to the Council earlier, with the exception of the second story being removed, and that he will obtain copies from the architect for the Council.

Councilman Fritz questioned whether the cost of the building would be \$900,000 less the grant of \$415,000. Chief Gittings noted that he has only rough estimates at this time. Mayor Eckman asked that Mr. Pellegrino be instructed to provide estimates and copies of the building plans to the Council by the next scheduled work session.

Kent Avenue Christmas Decorations

Chief Gittings noted that the Kent Avenue Corridor had great Christmas decorations this year. Many homes had decorations, but only fourteen residents were registered for the contest. Chief Gittings encouraged all residents to decorate and register to participate in the contest next year. He noted that all who registered for the contest were recognized and given a small prize.

Police Department Sign

Councilman Hale noted that the sign in front of the old post office building on La Grange Avenue was leaning again. Chief Gittings responded that he would ask the Public Works Department to fix the sign.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Equipment

Mr. Miller advised that Maryland Environmental Service (MES) had received bids for a belt-filter press for the wastewater treatment plant. He asked that the Council appropriate \$334,000 for the purchase of the press.

Mayor Eckman asked if the funds could be incorporated into the loan for the plant. Mr. Norris advised that there is \$497,000.00 available at 1.6% interest, but the funds are available only for a few days until the loan is closed out next week.

Councilman Hale questioned when the work would begin. Mr. Miller advised that he expected it would begin immediately upon notification to proceed. Mayor Eckman questioned the status of the used belt filter press that the Town owns. Mr. Miller stated that it is useable,

and currently Leonardtown is testing it because they are interested in purchasing it. Mayor Eckman suggested that since the purchase price was only \$10,000.00 perhaps the Town should keep it as a backup.

Councilman Ambrogio expressed his concern about spending that large sum of money and suggested that the Town get another opinion. Mr. Miller explained that MES did an evaluation of the solids because sludge has different characteristics based on the type of processing. Then MES prepared bid specifications, an RFP and bid evaluations. Mr. Miller stated that MES was chosen to handle the bid procurement because they are responsible for operating the plant and because they are qualified to do it.

Councilman Ambrogio asked if the current unit was feasible. Mr. Miller responded that the unit currently being used is a temporary unit owned by MES, that it is not sized correctly and that it is manpower intensive. Mayor Eckman noted that the cost of \$334,000.00 includes the removal of the old press, modifications to the building, and installation of the belt-filter press.

Councilman Fritz made a motion to incorporate an additional sum of \$334,000.00 into the loan for the sewer plant at 1.6% interest. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it carried by unanimous vote.

Hazard Mitigation Contractor

Councilman Winkler expressed his concern that the Town of La Plata would not be eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) grant funds if a Hazard Mitigation Plan is not developed in coordination with the Town of Indian Head and Charles County. He recommended that Cheryl McGuire be hired as a contractor to attend meetings and work with the local governments to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan. He suggested that since Town staff is strained enough with ongoing projects, it would be beneficial to have one person dedicated as a liaison to ensure that the Town is eligible for grant funds.

Councilman Hale questioned the Town not being eligible for funds even if the President declares the area a natural disaster area. Councilman Winkler stated that the information provided to him at yesterday's hazard mitigation meeting states that without a plan, the Town would not be eligible for grant funds. It was noted that these are federal guidelines, not state.

Councilman Fritz questioned whether or not this would affect localities helping each other with recovery efforts being able to obtain reimbursement. Mayor Eckman stated that he didn't think this would affect mutual aid agreements.

Mr. Miller responded to the Mayor's inquiry by noting that he was not able to attend the Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting because of a meeting with the State Highway Administration regarding the Centennial Street extension project. He stated that he had completed the questionnaire. He suggested that, based on the need for continuity and Mrs. McGuire's qualifications, it would be money well spent to hire her as a contractor.

Mayor Eckman suggested that having a representative of the police department may be the best person to attend the meetings since the plan deals with evacuation and emergency routes. Councilman Winkler noted that Charles County has the Planning Department, School Board, and Emergency Services involved, but no one from the Sheriff's Office. In response to Mayor Eckman, Mr. Miller responded that the questionnaire asks about building codes, history of damage and other information.

Councilman Hale asked if this would be a stand alone plan. Mr. Miller stated that it would be part of the overall emergency disaster plan, coordinated with the county and state levels.

Councilman Ambrogio questioned the Council's authority to hire without advertising. He suggested that the Town should advertise for services to see if any other qualified person is interested in the position. Mr. Miller advised that the Town is not required to interview for professional services of that value.

Councilman Winkler made a motion to hire Cheryl McGuire as a contractor at \$25.00 per hour, not to exceed \$5,000.00, to represent the Town of La Plata in working with the Town of Indian Head and Charles County Government in developing a Hazard Mitigation Plan. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it carried by majority vote. Mayor Eckman, Councilmen Winkler, Fritz and Hale voted aye. Councilman Ambrogio voted nay.

There being no further business, Councilman Hale made a motion to adjourn at 7:55 PM. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it carried.

Submitted by:

Carol L. Rollins