

Mayor and Council Meeting
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
November 12, 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, 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.

Approval of October minutes

Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 8 meeting. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Winkler made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 22 meeting. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Debris Removal - Steve Allen

Steve Allen made a brief presentation on the debris removal project and provided copies of the "Right of Entry La Plata Project" report. Mr. Allen praised the debris removal efforts of Ashbritt and the State's crews. He noted that last Friday was the last day for stumps and debris removal under this project, and advised he would provide copies of the official report and copies of a debris management action plan to the Town and the County. In response to Mr. Allen's question, Councilman Winkler advised that Southern Maryland Works is still working on debris removal.

Mayor Eckman presented a Town Seal to Mr. Allen, expressing the Town's appreciation for his leadership in coordinating the debris clean-up program to help La Plata's residents and business community recover from the tornado.

Oath of Office - Officer Earl T. Schubert, II

Mayor Eckman administered the taking of the Oath of Office by Earl T. Schubert, II, Police Officer of the Town of La Plata. Chief Gittings presented Officer Schubert with his badge and identification card.

Crime Watch Council presentation of Certificates of Appreciation

Judy Melvin thanked Mayor Eckman, Mr. Miller, the Town Council and the La Plata Police Department for their support of the Crime Watch Council's Fun Fest Day. Ms. Melvin and Officer Brooks presented certificates of appreciation to the people, organizations, and businesses who supported the Fun Fest Day.

Legislation

Resolution 02-6 - Charles County Watershed Protection Plan (For Adoption) - For the purpose of authorizing the Chief Executive Officer of the Town of La Plata to execute on behalf of the Town the forms necessary to participate in the Charles County Watershed Protection Plan - Tornado Debris Removal Program.

Mr. Miller briefly explained Resolution 02-6. Councilman Winkler made a motion to adopt Resolution 02-6. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion. During discussion before the vote, Mr. Miller advised Councilman Hale that the Town is working on the Oak Avenue residents' concern about working around fallen trees. Mayor Eckman noted that the Kiwanis members are doing clean-up work one weekend a month in King's Grant. Mr. Miller advised that the Town has an attachment to the backhoe that can pick up the debris for removal to the County recycling center. Following this discussion, a vote was taken on the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ordinance 02-19 - Historic District Landmark Designations (For Introduction) - For the purpose of designating certain properties as historic district landmarks in the Town of La Plata; requiring the Historic District Commission to hold a public hearing prior to recommending historic district landmarks to the Mayor and Council; and all matters generally relating to said historic district designations.

Councilman Winkler advised that the purpose of this ordinance is to designate houses and properties as historic landmarks, helping to keep historic certain historical buildings in La Plata. This ordinance includes eight properties whose owners are asking for designation as historic landmarks. He noted that property owners will be able to qualify for a tax credit of twenty cents on the dollar from the State of Maryland. Councilman Winkler praised Patti Bembe's efforts in preparing the ordinance and noted that hearings were being scheduled before the Historic District Commission, the Planning Commission and the Mayor and Council. The Mayor and Council will hold a hearing at their December 10, 2002 meeting.

Unfinished Business

Council Reports

Councilman Winkler reported that he would be working with Southern Maryland Works and the reforestation task force to see if they can work with the Town's Public Works Department to continue clean-up around the town, especially removal of the car on Maple Avenue. He noted that Cathy Evans is working on identifying County residents who are still not back in their homes. He further noted that if Ms. Evans is not including Town residents in this survey, the Town should do so.

Councilman Ambrogio reported that the Beautification Commission would be meeting next Monday, and asked Joe Harrison, chairman of the Beautification Commission, to report on the Veterans Salute Parade and Ceremony held November 10. Mr. Harrison advised that the event had been very successful. He noted there were two bands and praised Leonard Hall Naval Junior ROTC for doing a very good job for us for the fourth year. Councilman Hale agreed that this was one of the best parades and programs we've had.

Mayor Eckman praised Councilman Hale for his role as guest speaker. Councilman Winkler noted he had received compliments from several people about this event.

Councilman Hale reported on topics discussed at the November 5 Planning Commission meeting.

Councilman Fritz reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission would be meeting on Wednesday, November 13, at 5:00 p.m.

Mayor Eckman reported that the Vision Implementation Team met this morning. He noted that the design guidelines are nearly complete and should be introduced at the December 10 meeting of the Town Council. Public hearings are scheduled for the Planning Commission's January 7, 2003 meeting and for the Town Council's January 14 meeting. The Town Council could adopt the guidelines at the January 28 meeting, which would make them effective by February 12.

Mayor Eckman also reported that he received a call from Mr. Tucker, owner of the La Plata Brewhouse, to advise he would have a soft opening on November 25, with the grand opening on December 1.

At Mayor Eckman's request, Don McGuire reported briefly on the County's tornado warning system. Mr. McGuire reported on the order of events for the November 11 tornado watch and tornado warning. In response to Councilman's Fritz question regarding cost of the sirens, Mr. McGuire advised that the one the County installed in La Plata cost \$17,600, excluding actual installation, which SMECO helped install and donated the pole. Mr. McGuire estimated installation costs to be approximately \$1,000 each. He noted that their engineer advised that four would cover the Town. Mayor Eckman asked Mr. McGuire to look at what is needed and advise what the Town needs to do. Councilman Fritz suggested that the Town may want to require developers to participate in the cost of the sirens.

Councilman Ambrogio asked Mr. Miller for an update on the stormwater management issue on the O'Farrell and other properties on Oak Avenue. Mr. Miller advised that the Town has contracted with Ben Dyer Associates to conduct a study and report back to the Town on how to address the stormwater management issues there.

Councilman Ambrogio asked Chief Gittings for an update on the residents' concerns about loud noise from events at Willing Helpers Hall. Chief Gittings advised he was working with the State's Attorney's office to improve the Town's noise ordinance to make it more effectively enforceable.

Councilman Ambrogio reported on the lighting problems in the Meadows neighborhood, noting that one light was replaced on the west side of Jennie Run Drive and two lights are still burned out or broken at the intersections of Jennie Run Drive and Goose Creek Drive with Caroline Drive. Chief Gittings advised that the police department has reported them to SMECO. Mayor Eckman advised he will call Bill Lawman of SMECO. Officer Spaulding, who is with the Charles County Sheriff's Office Community Policing and is assigned to the Meadows area, remarked that SMECO was called and they responded and repaired one light. He noted that parts are being obtained for some lights which were destroyed and that they are working towards getting better lights.

Councilman Ambrogio provided an update on the issue of closing off Cedar Court at Kalmia Court.

He reported on the letter sent to the Town by Chief Shahan, La Plata Volunteer Fire Department, indicating the fire department does not support closing Cedar Court.

New Business (none)

Public Forum

Earl Woodland, 314 Jennie Run Drive, asked the Town to look at getting the cobra-style lights for the Meadows area, which he noted are brighter and for which parts would be easier to obtain. Mayor Eckman agreed that the neighborhood needs more lighting, but noted that SMECO would not install cobra-style lights where there are underground utilities. He noted that the Town may be able to request they do so on an experimental basis.

Chris Thompson, 122 Kalmia Court, thanked the Town for having the light bulbs replaced on Kalmia Court and asked Councilman Winker what the status was on forming the task force. Councilman Winkler advised that the Town Council would discuss this at their next morning work session, and noted that they needed to decide who would be in charge, either the La Plata Police Department or the Charles County Sheriff's Office. Mayor Eckman remarked that the Town is looking at several approaches to address the problems in the neighborhood, including enforcement of the Town's rental property ordinance and financing issues, and hopes it will be active by the first of next year.

Councilman Hale asked Officer Spaulding to report on the Community Policing initiatives in the Meadows neighborhood. Officer Spaulding reported that he has been in the neighborhood for two months and noted that the Hot Spots grant money for the program is currently in limbo due to the election of a new governor and lieutenant governor. Officer Spaulding also reported on actions he has taken to secure information and to encourage compliance by residents and enforcement by HUD of rental violations. The Mayor and Council expressed their appreciation to Officer Spaulding for the report and for working with the Town to improve the Meadows neighborhood.

Chris Thompson thanked Chief Gittings for the increased police presence on Kalmia Court.

Art Audley, 846 Holly Drive, reported that a "fledgling organization" has been formed in the Meadows, and thanked Chief Gittings, Councilman Ambrogio, and Captain Wyant, CCSO, for attending their meeting. He noted that their ideas and support are appreciated.

There being no further business, Councilman Hale made a motion to adjourn at 8:14 PM. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk