

# TOWN NOTES

*News from La Plata Town Hall*



## MAYOR'S CORNER

There appears to be no shortage of tax increases proposed or implemented by county, state, or federal legislative bodies. Charles County has recommended a substantial property tax increase for the next fiscal year, the State of Maryland will raise the income tax rate on individuals earning income above a specified level, and the federal government is always looking for ways to increase tax revenues. When you add it all together you are talking major increases on many of the residents of La Plata. It is for this reason that the La Plata Town Council worked hard in its budget deliberations to retain the current Town tax rate of 32 cents per \$100 of assessed value for the next fiscal year. Although we have had to raise some of our fees and charges for services provided due to increased costs, we strive to keep these increases as low as possible.

Every year the Mayor and Council are required to meet with the Charles County Commissioners to discuss the cost of duplicate services in order to establish a tax differential rate for the forthcoming fiscal year. The tax differential rate is established to recognize the savings to the County for services provided by the Town of La Plata. Examples are police services, road maintenance, planning and zoning, and general public works operations. While State law does not mandate that counties provide municipalities a tax differential, it has been customary in Charles County that a tax differential be applied to residents of La Plata and Indian Head to compensate town residents for

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## La Plata receives Banner Town designation for the fifth year in a row!



The Banner Town designation is the Maryland Municipal League's (MML) highest member achievement award. The program is designed to encourage and reward exceptional participation in MML programs and activities and to foster teamwork among municipal officials. The program criteria consists of participating in all of the following: Visits to at least one school to encourage 4<sup>th</sup> graders to participate in the "If I Were Mayor, I would..." essay contest, have at least one representative from the Town attend four Southern Maryland Municipal Association chapter meetings, send a representative to the annual MML fall conference and have at least one elected official participate in at least one of the following: serve on the MML Board of Directors, enrollment in the Academy for Excellence in Local Governance program or participate in the Student Shadowing Experience Program. All of the criteria must have been accomplished between June 1, 2011 and May 25, 2012. The Council has already begun working toward next year's requirements.

## 2011 Consumer Confidence Report Available:

The report is designed to inform you about the water quality and services the Town delivers to you every day. Maryland Environmental Service, an agency of the State of Maryland, operates the water treatment facility and prepared the report on behalf of the Town. The report was mailed to all utility customers on June 25 and printed in the Maryland Independent on June 27, 2012. The report is also available on the Town website [www.townoflaplata.org](http://www.townoflaplata.org).



Town of La Plata



La Plata Tornado

## COUNCIL COLUMN

### Councilman Joe Norris, Ward 4

As I write this, summer is definitely with us. This past week has been a record setting week for the temperature. Everything is extremely dry and we need some rain. I hope you fared well after the recent Derecho Storm that struck our area. I was happy to find out what kind of storm it was and how rare it occurred in our area. As it was taking place I told my wife that I had never experienced a storm like this. As with every other summer we have been to the Maryland Municipal League Summer Meeting and Convention. The meeting is always a wonderful opportunity to find out how other people in our position are dealing with some of the problems that we all have. There are also great educational opportunities which I appreciate.

This year we were particularly proud to receive the Maryland Municipal League Achievement Award for our Downtown Wi-Fi Project in partnership with the Charles County Public Library. There were only two awards given this year,

one for mid size towns and another for larger cities. Congratulations to staff for carrying out this long term priority of the Council. I was also proud that we had two principal presenters for education workshops. Former Mayor and current consultant to the Town, Bill Eckman, gave a presentation with a Q and A session on "Recovering from a Natural Disaster". It was both interesting and informative. Also our Director of Planning and Community Development, David Jenkins, presented a workshop on "How to Read a Construction/ Site Plan for Non-Engineers". Both of them did a great job.

I hope you have been able to come out and enjoy our Friday Night Concerts. If not, I hope to see you soon. Bring your blanket or lawn chairs and your friends and take advantage of the great free entertainment.

For information on all the activities in town and other vital information to visit our website ([www.townoflaplata.org](http://www.townoflaplata.org)). Also to help us get specialized informa-

tion to you quickly please register your email with the town. Just send it to Carolyn Johnson at [cjohnson@townoflaplata.org](mailto:cjohnson@townoflaplata.org).

As always if you have any questions, comments or issues, I may be reached by phone at (301) 934-9230 or by email at [jnorris@townoflaplata.org](mailto:jnorris@townoflaplata.org). Thank you for allowing me to serve.

### Code Corner

The following information has been printed in a previous edition of the Town Notes, but with the hurricane, tropical storm, earthquake and Derecho storm of the past year it may be worth repeating. Property damage from these recent events may have residents needing to do some landscaping or home improvement repairs/construction and this information is very important before you begin any project.

There are a variety of utility services running underground – do you know where they are? If you plan on any type of excavation or digging on your property, call Miss Utility first. Miss Utility is your partner when it comes to safe digging.

Miss Utility is a one-call notification center that informs subscribing facility/utility owners of proposed excavation. So, if you plan to install a new mailbox or plant a garden, contact the Miss Utility Call Center at least (48) business hours prior to your intended digging. Miss Utility will notify your facility/utility owner of your proposed plans to dig; they in turn will locate (mark your dig site or verify the site is clear) before you put the shovel in the ground.

The phone number for the Miss Utility Call center is 1-800-257-7777 or call 811. Visit Miss Utility on the web at <http://call811.com>.



## AUGUST IS SPEED AWARENESS MONTH

The Council of the Town of La Plata and the La Plata Police Department have declared August as *Speed Awareness Month*. August signals the end of summer and the start of another school year. The goal of Speed Awareness Month is to slow down traffic, thus saving lives. La Plata Police Department Chief Gittings states, "If we can make drivers more aware of the speed limits and encourage them to drive within the posted limits, the citizens and visitors of the Town will have a safer, happier August. We strongly encourage drivers to always drive within the speed limit throughout the year. Please help us reach our goal; obey the speed limit."



# BEAUTIFICATION GRANT AWARD



The Walter J Mitchell Green Team this year was proud to be awarded the Beautification Grant from the Town of La Plata. With the funds

they were able to construct 30 blue bird houses, six of which are on the Mitchell grounds. They were also able to restore the outdoor classroom and revitalize the nature trail leading to the outdoor classroom with new nature markers and an entrance sign. Finally, they made 5 rain barrels to aid in our water conservation efforts. The community is welcome to come visit to see all of the outstanding efforts to help make Mitchell more green. The Walter J Mitchell Green Team wanted to thank all of our community helpers and fantastic Mitchell parents for all their help. They could not have done it without your continued support!



*Seated left to right: Superintendent James Richmond, Mayor Roy Hale, Councilwoman Paddy Mudd, Councilman, Joe Norris, Beautification members: Judy Norris, Helen Lucas and Margaret Boggs at Walter J. Mitchell elementary school at a presentation by the Green Team.*

## MAYOR'S CORNER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the services that the County will not have to provide.

A formula was developed many years ago to fairly calculate the amount La Plata property owner's taxes would be reduced. Your Town officials believe that the formula should be used each fiscal year to ensure that town residents are treated equally with those who do not live within an incorporated Town.

Each fiscal year the County establishes a real property tax rate as does the Town of La Plata. Without a tax differential, La Plata property owners would pay the full county rate plus the town tax rate and would in fact be paying for county services they do not receive. For the past two budgets, Charles County has assessed property owners in La Plata and Indian Head with taxes for County services that the County does not provide to them.

For fiscal year 2012, the tax differential formula calculated a rate of \$0.110 per \$100 of assessed value; which means your taxes should have been 11 cents lower last year. For fiscal year 2013 a rate of \$0.109 has been calculated; which means your taxes should be 10.9 cents lower in your next tax bill. However, the County only permitted a tax differential of \$0.085 for fiscal year 2012 and has adopted the same rate for fiscal year 2013; which means your taxes are only reduced 8.5 cents in both years. While about \$0.025 of a higher tax rate may seem small, La Plata property owners will pay over \$500,000 in additional taxes to the County, over the course of these two fiscal years, in excess of what the tax differential formula has indicated should be paid. This is not a small sum in total and it warrants full disclosure to all Town residents.

As indicated earlier, the County has the authority to set the tax differential rate, including a rate of zero, but fairness dictates that the full rate be applied, otherwise we in the Town pay a larger percentage of the costs of county government than our neighbors who reside outside of the town limits. Each year we make our case, but the authority to charge La Plata property owners for services it does not provide resides with the County Commissioners.

I hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable summer.

As your Mayor, I will always be interested in your comments, both favorable and critical. You may reach me at Town Hall (301) 934-8421 or at home (301) 934-4850.

## Town Hall Closed

The Town Hall will be closed on the following days:

**Labor Day** **Monday, September 3, 2012**

If you have a **water or sewer emergency** after hours, call (301)934-8421 and follow the instructions given to report your emergency. The automated response system will alert the appropriate department to respond to you.

## TOWN OF LA PLATA OFFICIALS

Mayor: Roy G. Hale

**Council:**

- Wayne Winkler ..... Ward 1
- C. Keith Back ..... Ward 2
- Paddy Mudd ..... Ward 3
- Joseph W. Norris ..... Ward 4

Town Manager:

Daniel J. Mears

Treasurer: Robert W. Oliphant

Assistant Town Manager:

Michelle D. Miner

Town Clerk: Danielle Mandley

Project Manager: Steven F. Schroeder

Police Chief: Cassin B. Gittings

Director of Planning and Community

Development: David M. Jenkins

Director of Operations: Robert F. Stahl, Jr.

Director of Public Works:

Jeffrey S. Garner

Senior Planner: Theresa C. Dent

Manager of Inspections: James Q. Yates

305 Queen Anne Street,  
La Plata, Maryland 20646

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Telephone: 301-934-8421 / 301-870-3377

La Plata Police Department: 301-934-1500

Email: [mminer@townoflaplata.org](mailto:mminer@townoflaplata.org)

Website: [www.townoflaplata.org](http://www.townoflaplata.org)

# LA PLATA TOWN SERVICES

## Special Trash Pickup

Bulk items are picked up the first Monday of each month, or the following Monday if the first one is a holiday. Large amounts of loose material (such as brush) should be bundled or bagged in such a manner that the weight is less than 50 lbs. The Town reserves the right not to pickup items too heavy to safely handle. General construction cleanup and hazardous materials are not eligible. Items must be at curbside by 7:30 a.m. on pickup day. Call town Hall before pickup day to be placed on the list. Billing for special trash pickup is included on your quarterly utility bill.

## Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Household hazardous waste collection days for 2012 are on the first Satur-



CHARLES COUNTY  
**HOUSEHOLD  
HAZARDOUS WASTE  
COLLECTION**

day of each month through December from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. in the parking lot of the Department of Public Works building, located at 10430 Audie Lane, off of Radio Station Road in La Plata. Household hazardous waste collection is a contracted service and items cannot be accepted when the contractor is not on site.

Items accepted free of charge include pesticides, herbicides, fertilizer, gasoline, motor oil, antifreeze, paint, cleaning supplies, pool chemicals, batteries, expired prescription drugs, and other poisons that are around your house. Please keep the materials in their

original containers whenever possible, and bring them to the collection site in cardboard boxes to ease unloading.

For more information, call the Charles County Department of Public Facilities, Environmental Resources Division at (301) 932-3599.

## Yard Waste Pick Up

Residential yard waste pickups will only take place on Monday and Fridays. Containers of yard waste ONLY – leaves, grass and shrub clippings, brush or branches may be put out on Mondays and Fridays. The containers must be marked “Yard Waste”. Brush or branches must be bundled, weigh no more than 50lbs. per bundle, and the branches may not be larger than 4 feet long. *Plastic bags are not allowed – if you bag yard waste you must use paper bags.*

## Trash Collection Schedule Adjustment

If your regular trash collection day is:  
Monday, September 3

Trash will be picked up on:  
Tuesday, September 4

## Recycling Collection Adjustment

Recycling for Wednesday, September 5 may be delayed or not picked up until Thursday, September 6 due to the Labor Day holiday on September 4.

## Special Pick-Up Schedule Adjustment

Due to the Labor Day holiday on September 4 special pick-ups will be moved to Monday, September 10. Please call by 4:00 pm on Friday, September 7 to be put on the list

# LA PLATA WiFi ZONE



La Plata's WiFi Zone wins Maryland Municipal League Medium Town Award at annual convention.

The theme of the Maryland Municipal League achievement awards competition was “Just a Darn Good Idea!”. Cities and

towns were encouraged to submit projects or programs that they had implemented to fill the voids and meet the needs of its citizens.

For several years a WiFi system has been a service priority of La Plata's Town Council. A web survey indicated 73% support for downtown WiFi, with 56% of respondents strongly supportive. With the development of mobile devices becoming more common, this service helps visitors find businesses

that they otherwise might have missed. It allows users to connect to the Internet in between shopping, dining, and taking care of a variety of service needs, and thus hopefully encourages economic development in the downtown.

Mayor Hale proudly accepted the award on behalf of the Town and its citizens.



# SEPTEMBER 2012

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY



1

Farmers Market;  
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



8

Chili Cook Off;  
noon to 3:00 p.m.  
Farmers Market;  
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



6

Recycling pick up may  
continue from 9/5



7

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Concert: "Eric Scott  
Band"; 7:00 p.m.



15

Farmers Market;  
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

13

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Concert: "Anthony  
"Swamp Dog" Clark";  
7:00 p.m.

14



22

Farmers Market;  
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
1st day of Autumn

20

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Concert: "Lionel Ward &  
the New World Band";  
7:00 p.m.

21



29

Farmers Market;  
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

27

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Concert: "John Luskley  
Band"; 7:00 p.m.

28



26

Farmers Market;  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.



12

Farmers Market;  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
Parks and Recreation  
Commission Meeting;  
5:00 p.m.

13

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Concert: "Anthony  
"Swamp Dog" Clark";  
7:00 p.m.

14



19

Farmers Market;  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
Design Review  
Board meeting;  
9:00 a.m.

20

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Concert: "Lionel Ward &  
the New World Band";  
7:00 p.m.

21

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Beautification  
Commission  
Meeting; 4:00 p.m.



Town Council Work  
Session; 7:00 p.m.



25

Town Council Business  
Meeting; 7:00 p.m.

27

Yard Waste Pick Up  
Concert: "John Luskley  
Band"; 7:00 p.m.

28

23/30

24

Yard Waste Pick Up

# SPECIAL EVENTS

## Summer Concert Series

Join us for the Friday night Summer Concert Series at the La Plata Town Hall. The weekly concerts take place on the lawn at La Plata Town Hall at 305 Queen Anne Street. Concert goers are encouraged to bring blankets and lawn chairs for sitting. Coolers are allowed, but no alcohol, please. Concessions are available from the Town's food trailer located near the back of the parking lot; an ice cream truck is also stationed there for your enjoyment. A play area for children, the Kids' Zone, allows parents to enjoy the concert while keeping an eye on the little ones. For more information, contact La Plata Town Hall at 301-934-8421, or check the full concert schedule at [www.townofaplata.org](http://www.townofaplata.org).



## Upcoming Concerts

August 3	The Blarney Stones
August 10	Three Sixty Band
August 17	US Navy Band Country Current
August 24	Southern Maryland Concert Band
August 31	Cover Story
September 7	Eric Scott Band
September 14	Anthony "Swamp Dog" Clark
September 21	Lionel Ward and the New World Band
September 28	John Luskey Band

Thanks to all who attended the Watermelon Bash on July 4th!



## Mid Summer Concert Survey

We are just over halfway through this season's Friday Night Concerts at Town Hall. We would appreciate getting your feedback on the bands and the event itself. The survey is available on the Event page at [www.townofaplata.org](http://www.townofaplata.org). Your opinion matters to us and the Town wants you, your families, and the entire community to have enjoyable experiences this year and for many years to come.

## Chili Cook Off



Have you been told before that your chili is the BEST? Well you could be the next Chili Champ! Sign up to participate in this year's Chili Cook Off on Saturday, September 8 from 12 pm to 3 pm at Town Hall. Details and entry forms are available online

at [www.townofaplata.org](http://www.townofaplata.org) under events.

Free fun for the whole family with activities for



the kids and live music from the Three Sixty Band. Come out to enjoy free samples of the cook-off entries and vote for your favorite in the People's Choice Award.

## Save the Date for the Fall Festival

# LA PLATA Fall Festival

Sunday, October 21st from 12 pm to 4 pm at Town Hall

- Family fun and games
- Live music, craft vendors & displays and delicious food for sale

For more information on the Town of La Plata Special Events, contact Colleen Wilson at 301-934-8421 ext 142 or [CWilson@TownofLaPlata.org](mailto:CWilson@TownofLaPlata.org)

## 7th Annual Festival of Scarecrows

Sponsored by: Charles County Chamber of Commerce and the Town of La Plata.

For more information contact the Chamber at 301-932-6500



## WEBSITE POLL



Visit the Town of La Plata's website at <http://www.townoflaplata.org> to participate in an online poll. Click on the 'Snap Poll' link on the left side of the web page to go to the poll and see the results to date. The current question is:

How should La Plata fund road maintenance in the future?

Wait for the State Legislature to return Highway User Revenue to La Plata

Increase property taxes

Discontinue another municipal service

Let roads deteriorate

Seek authority from Maryland Legislature for a new local source of revenue

### June Website Poll Results

Below are the website 'Snap Poll' results from the last issue. The question and results are:

What is the condition of your street?

Excellent condition – 22%

Minor cracks and potholes – 36%

Moderate repair and patching required – 25%

In significant need of repair – 17%

La Plata has had a strong history of maintaining its roads well. The funds used to maintain roads came from you through motor fuel taxes you pay at the pump, which were collected by the State

of Maryland. Those taxes are put into the Transportation Trust Fund, and are then allocated to local governments like La Plata based upon a formula of the number of road miles maintained, and the number of motor vehicle registrations in the town.

Unfortunately, with the beginning of the economic downturn, the State took money from the Transportation Trust Fund to balance its budget, and has done so every year since. In the first two budgets, Maryland took 90% of road funding away from local government. For the past two budgets including the FY 13 budget, Maryland took away 75% of local government road funding. The funding for local roads from state motor fuel taxes is called Highway User Revenue, and has been the sole source of local road maintenance revenue for decades.

The impact of losing this revenue source is significant, as La Plata has lost about \$400,000 per year. Our residents continue to pay the tax, without the local benefit. As a result, the roads in La Plata, which have historically been in great condition, have been slowly deteriorating. With the roads in La Plata being in generally good condition, the decision for the past few budgets has been to largely defer maintenance on local roads, rather than discontinue another municipal service or increase property taxes.

In the coming months and years, discussion

about how to fund local road maintenance will be ongoing. The Maryland Municipal League who represent cities and towns across Maryland have been making the case to State legislators to return Highway User Revenues to local governments, although they have been unsuccessful. It is not anticipated that the State of Maryland will return Trust Fund revenue to local government. Instead the trend has been for legislators to push more cost burden to local government. Local governments now bear a higher burden of cost for the State pension system, road maintenance, and also police aid, which is the funds local governments collect for motor vehicle fines.

Each time that you are at the pump, remember that the fuel tax you are paying is no longer all coming back to maintain your roads. Few La Plata roads will be receiving maintenance for the foreseeable future because the State raided the Transportation Trust Fund. Share your ideas on how La Plata should fund road maintenance by looking at the latest Snap Poll question.

## RUTH BLACKWELL



From left to right: Councilwoman Paddy Mudd, Principal Ruth Blackwell, Mayor Roy Hale

On Sunday, June 10 on behalf of the Town Council for La Plata, Mayor Roy Hale and Councilwoman Paddy Mudd presented Principal Ruth Blackwell of Grace Lutheran Church and School with a proclamation thanking her for her many years of service to the school and the community. The school and

church held a special ceremony commemorating Miss Blackwell's time as principal at the school. Miss Blackwell has taken the position of principal at First Lutheran School in Knoxville, Tennessee.

## ANNEXATION

Annexation is the process of legally including within the corporate limits of the town, land that is outside the municipality.

The Town's authority to annex comes from Article 23A of the Annotated Code of Maryland, while Article 66B grants zoning authority.

In order for land to be annexed into an existing municipality, an area must be contiguous and adjoining to the existing municipal corporate boundary and may not be located within another incorporated municipality. Also, annexation of the area may not create an enclave of unincorporated area that would be completely surrounded on all sides by land within the municipality upon completion of the annexation.

Filing requirements include completion of an annexation petition signed by the owners of 25% of the total assessed property in the area proposed for annexation, a non-refundable annexation fee, a plat showing current and proposed boundaries and an annexation plan, with existing and proposed zoning.

Upon acceptance of a complete annexation petition, it is forwarded to the Town Planning Commission for their review. Review comments are requested from Charles County and the Maryland Department of Planning. The Planning Commission may conduct work sessions as part of their review process. They are required to conduct a public hearing to determine the appropriate Town zoning if the annexation were to be approved. Their zoning recommendation is then forwarded to the Town Council.

The Town Council may also have work sessions as part of their review process. They are also required to have a public hearing to

obtain public comment about the requested annexation petition. The Town Council is the approval authority to deny or approve all annexation petition requests. If approved, an annexation agreement is prepared and is part of any annexation approval. An annexation plan is also approved and must include proposed land uses, available land that could be used for anticipated public facilities that may be needed and anticipated means of financing the extension of services. If approved the annexation is effective 45 days after passage by the Town, unless petitioned to referendum.

Petitions for a referendum require signatures at least 20% of the registered voters in the Town.

If the annexation becomes official the resultant new Town boundary must be sent to the County Clerk and the Maryland Department of Legislative Services.

In La Plata, the Town Council has customarily required an Annexation Agreement when considering an annexation that was petitioned by property owners. Annexation agreements are contractual documents that stipulate additional requirements of those petitioning to be part of La Plata. Terms of those agreements have included new infrastructure for Town water and sewer systems, enhanced landscaping requirements, green building requirements, enhanced site security, funding for new transportation or pedestrian facilities, deed restrictions on the property, recreation amenities, or other items that would provide benefit to the Town.

There are many issues that the Town Council reviews and the public debates as pros

and cons to annexation. These may include increased residential or commercial development, expansion of the Town's assessable base, Town input and control over future land use in areas adjacent to the Town, changes in traffic, storm water management, neighborhood character, crime, new commercial services, logical Town boundaries, mitigation of environmental problems like failing septic systems, concessions for public facilities improvements, concern of impact on municipal services, or other items related to the petitioned annexation.

There exists a perception that annexations are commonplace in La Plata, which is not the case. Just one annexation for 14 acres has been approved in the past five years. Most of the new development proposed for La Plata is coming from land that was annexed into Town over 20 years ago. Despite some articles in the newspaper, and discussion of potential land annexation, at the time of writing this article in the first week of July, there are no valid petitions for annexation before the Town.

While the State requires local government to define a Municipal Growth Area, that designation requires towns to plan for how they could provide basic municipal services to the area. La Plata complied with the State requirement as part of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, yet the Town does not solicit land to annex. Instead the Town must review petitions for annexation that have been submitted by adjoining property owners. There is always the possibility a petition may be filed, and La Plata residents would be notified of public meetings held if any are submitted.

## NEW EMPLOYEES



Micheal Templeton joined the Public Works department in May as a Public Works Technician I. Micheal was born and raised in Clinton, Maryland and currently resides in Mason Springs, Maryland. In his free time he enjoys playing baseball and basketball.



In April the Public Works Department welcomed Cody Garner as a Public Works Technician I. Cody graduated from La Plata High School and lives in Charlotte Hall, Maryland. He enjoys hunting, fishing and spending time with his son.

### **Commercial Building Permits issued 5/1/12-6/30/12**

Civista Emergency Room Renovation - 5 Garrett Avenue

Japan Express - 105F Drury Drive

Sweetfrog - 105A Drury Drive

Civista Surgical Association - 500 Charles Street

Civista Wound Healing Center - 9 Garrett Avenue

### **Commercial Occupancy Permits issued 5/1/12-6/30/12**

The Mentor Network - 200 Kent Avenue

Little Caesars - 28 Shining Willow Way

CCNRC Dialysis Center --10210 La Plata Road

# TOWN OF LA PLATA

305 Queen Anne Street

P. O. Box 2268

La Plata, Maryland 20646-2268

PRESORTED  
FIRST CLASS MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
WALDORF, MD  
PERMIT NO. 10131



**Town Notes** is a publication of the Town of La Plata.

## SOLICITORS

Whether the thought of a door to door salesman brings up memories of the local vacuum cleaner salesman, or it fills you with dread thinking about an unwanted bother at your door, it is important to know about solicitor safety and La Plata's regulations. Door to door sales are regulated by section 128-5 of the Town Code. Any vendor engaged in solicitation door to door within the Town shall first secure a permit before beginning the solicitations. Please note that as of this article being written in the first week of July, there has never been a permit issued to a door to door salesman in La Plata. If you have ever had one come to your home, they had been conducting business without a valid permit.

If someone comes to your door without you asking them to come, you should be very cautious about their intent. While not everyone going door to door is a criminal, there are many different types of scams that are conducted in this manner. They may either be after your credit card information, be attempting to sell stolen merchandise or inferior products, they may intend physical harm, or they may be casing your home for a later burglary. It is best to be careful in circumstances of an unsolicited solicitor, you don't know what their true intentions are.

- If a solicitor is unwanted, the best thing you can do is not open the door. Simply wait for them to leave.
- Call the La Plata Police. Chances are the solicitor does not have a valid permit. Be

prepared to give a full description of the person who came to your door, what vehicle they were driving, and what direction they went. Please call for anyone in your neighborhood who appears suspicious.

- If you do open the door, ask to see their permit issued by the Town of La Plata. If they do not produce one, simply say no thank you and close the door. Then call the Police and provide the description stated above.

A door to door salesperson that applies for a permit from the Town of La Plata must provide personal information, contact information, information about their employer, their vehicle, and are checked by La Plata Police. If a permit is in order, it simply means that the Town will be able to identify the individual and the business in the future. It does not mean that their products or services will be any good, or that they will deliver what they promise you. As with all sales arrangements the buyer must beware.

- Do not let any solicitor into your home. Keep the solicitor outside so neighbors may see if there is a problem.
- Do not give any money to someone you are not comfortable with.
- Do not give any money before the product is delivered or the service is rendered.
- If you already purchased something from a solicitor, and have paid by check and do not feel comfortable with the transaction, cancel the check as soon as possible.

- If considering the service or product, ask the salesperson to return at a later time before buying. Take that time to check out their company online, with the Better Business Bureau, or with others to ensure you are comfortable.
- Do not pay with cash. Pay by check to ensure payment can be stopped, or the transaction can be tracked later if needed.
- Tell your children to never open the door to any stranger.
- Be wary of a person that uses high pressure sales tactics.
- Read and understand any document before signing it.
- Get a receipt for any purchase.
- Ask lots of questions and request brochures and business cards.
- Just because they use the name of a recognized company does not mean they represent them.

Salespeople are trained to sell and overcome your objections. They know how to create a perceived need when none exists. They want you to make an emotional decision to buy and may use high pressure tactics to get the sale. Always remember that you did not ask them to be there. If you really want the product or service, get it from a business located in the Town of La Plata instead of someone passing through, with no commitment to the community.