

TOWN NOTES

News from La Plata Town Hall



MAYOR'S CORNER

The Holiday Season is over but I trust the spirit of Christmas will remain for a very long time. It is also a new year that I hope will be a very good year for each and everyone.

At the end of last year, Paddy Mudd, a Councilwoman for the Town of La Plata since 2005, decided to move from her current residence in Ward III to a home located in Ward IV. Since she will leave the ward she represents, she has resigned effective January 1. Hammad Matin, a resident of Ward III and a local attorney, has been appointed by the Council to complete the remaining four months of Paddy's term. As we welcome Hammad to the Council it is with sincere regret that we lose Paddy as a member of your elected Town Council. Paddy stepped forward to serve following personal tragedies with the loss of her husband and son to illnesses and has served the Town and her ward in an outstanding manner. Personable, dedicated and never failing to speak out on issues that she deemed important, Paddy will be deeply missed on the Council. On a brighter note, Paddy will remain in La Plata and has agreed to be a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Over the course of the last year, the Town has moved forward on many fronts, especially with the upgrade and improvements to the waste water treatment plant, new Town hires, improvements in our parks systems, and the advent of our La Plata Town Centre Redevelopment Corporation. We have seen new businesses open in our Town and we have lost some long time standing businesses. While we would prefer not to lose any business, economic realities dictate open and closings. Some establishments have closed and then reopened like Roy Rogers. We hope that others will have the same opportunity in the future.

Continued on page 3

Maryland Municipal League Geocache Trail



Front of Coin



Back of Coin

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then search to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location.

Special geocaches have been hidden at 48 sites

throughout Maryland (one of which is in the Town of La Plata). The first 200 people who find and record at least 20 geocaches will receive a commemorative trackable geocoin. To be eligible for the coin, record the location, date and code of your find in the Official MML Geotrail Passport and post a picture at each cache. For more details and passport information visit: www.mdmunicipal.org/geocache.

Reminisce with Us...



Holidays are a wonderful opportunity to spend time with family and friends and to reminisce about days gone by. Now that we are back to school and work and the Town's decorations are packed away, we still yearn for those happy memories. Take a step back in time and join the La Plata High School Music program as they host their 21st Annual Antique Show and Sale. Let the brightly colored Pyrex mixing bowls your mom used to use bring back memories of when it was ok to lick the spatula and beaters. See vintage toys and furniture that you had when you were a child and jewelry and clothing.

You might just find that one thing you've been looking for. Come find out how much that old bread box you've been saving is worth. Please come shop, browse and join us for lunch on Saturday 10am to 5pm and Sunday 11am to 4pm, February 9th and 10th. Admission is \$5 or \$4 with an ad from the newspaper or advertising post card (available at the Town Hall). For more information call (301) 259-2411.



Town of La Plata

COUNCIL COLUMN

Councilman Joe Norris, Ward 4

Though it will be early February when you read this I still want to wish you and your families a happy, healthy and prosperous new year. I am looking forward to a year of new challenges and opportunities for La Plata. We will do our best to overcome the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities.

A big thank you and well wishes to Paddy Mudd who as you know already has resigned her seat on the Town Council. Paddy has been an active and effective representative for the people of La Plata. Though we did not always agree on issues she would certainly be the person I would want representing my interests. She

has been a hard working and passionate member of this council. Again my thanks and best wishes to Paddy in her new endeavors.

I would be remiss if I didn't also thank the many volunteers who serve on our various boards and commissions. These generous people give many hours of their time addressing a variety of matters for the Town. Please visit the Town website, townoflaplata.org and click on the commissions tab to learn more. You can find out what each commission or board is responsible for, when they meet and who the members are. Also please consider submitting an application for one of the groups that you would have an interest in. From time to time there are vacancies and

it would help to have a reserve of interested persons.

In the coming weeks and months the council will be spending a great deal of time working on the 2013-2014 budget. The budget will lay out the plans for the next fiscal year's activities. Some of it will be pretty well set but much of it will require thought and discussion to arrive at a consensus for our future activities. These meetings are always open to the public so please take an interest and be informed.

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

WARD III-NEW COUNCILMAN HAMMAD MATIN



Hammad Matin taking the Oath of Office as administered by Sherri Hancock, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Charles County.

On January 8, 2013 at the La Plata Town Council meeting, La Plata resident Hammad S. Matin was appointed to fill the Ward III council seat vacated by Paddy Mudd in December. Mr. Matin will represent Ward III until the next election in May 2013. Hammad was born in La Plata, attending and graduating from Charles County public schools. He earned his B.A. from the University of Maryland at College Park and his J.D. from Washington and Lee University School of Law.

Prior to opening his own law office, Hammad was an Assistant States Attorney for Charles County and worked as a law clerk for the Honorable Robert C. Nalley. Mr. Matin formerly served as the Southern Maryland field representative to U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, served as Chairman of the Charles County Housing Commission, President of the Charles County Bar Association and Vice President of the La Plata Lions Club.

NEW EMPLOYEE



Jeff Wooddell

Officer Jeff Wooddell joined the Town of La Plata Police Department in November. He retired from the Maryland Natural Resources Police in October after 24 years. While there he served the last five years in Charles County. Prior to that he was a wildlife biologist in western Maryland. As an officer with NRP he was a Field Training Officer, member of the honor guard, a firearms instructor, an instructor at their academy, an agency weapons armorer, and the assistant dive master for their Underwater Operations Unit (dive team). He is very excited to be a part of the Police Department and looks forward to be a part of a successful career in La Plata.

MAKING LA PLATA MORE EFFICIENT

With resources strained by challenges in the economy, it is vital that the Town explore ways to make its operations more efficient to save money, time, and add value to the services provided. Town staff is charged with finding new ways to improve services, and the Town regularly invests in technology or implements process changes to drive efficiencies.

Contract Labor

One of the larger expenses of operating municipal government is the cost of labor. It takes people to do many of the tasks associated with providing service to the community. This section of the newsletter often covers how the Town utilizes a different technology or process to reduce the demand on labor and improve the efficiency of service offered. Another means of providing efficiency is with the type of labor that is used. Some tasks

that the Town has to perform are seasonal in nature. A good example is with grass cutting and landscape maintenance. Between Town facilities, parks, and rights of way, the Town has a lot of grass that it must mow on a seasonal basis each year.

During the grass growing months, the Town's labor needs are higher for public works than they are at other times of the year. The need for additional labor is partially offset by other seasonal tasks like snow plowing, brush pickup, or other tasks that can be scheduled on a flexible basis. Instead of hiring full time, year round staff to ensure there are sufficient labor hours to complete warm weather landscaping needs, the Town utilizes contract labor to perform much of the mowing and landscaping needs. By contracting with Melwood each year, the Town supplements its labor force when labor demands are higher. Some mowing

and landscaping tasks are still performed by Town employees, but the majority of the work is done as needed through a contract. Utilizing contracts like this assures the Town uses its limited funding efficiently, and helps assure there is not a surplus of available labor in the lower demand periods of the year.

MAYOR'S CORNER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

We have also had to address some major issues in the past year, such as the Wal-Mart Annexation and the modification of the Heritage Green Annexation. Granted these issues have been controversial with support and non-support falling on both sides of the issue. This is understandable and it is the reason that the Council spends considerable time on first understanding and then debating the positives and negatives of each issue. Some feel that the Council is either not aware or just ignore the feelings of our residents when we vote on these important issues. I can assure you once again that this is not factual. There are five members on the Council and we each have a single vote. When it is time to vote those votes carry a lot of weight and responsibility because we understand that we are not just voting our individual position but are representing every resident of La Plata. Therefore, it is important for residents to attend our Council Meetings and participate in Public Hearings held before major issues are decided.

One point that I have addressed before and I believe deserves to be restated is the responsibility of the Council to plan for the future of our Town. This is an inherent responsibility of the Council that cannot be delegated. For example, the Council voted unanimously to modify the Heritage Green Annexation to remove the current provision for a golf course and substitute the golf course with almost 300 acres of park and recreation land. Some feel that we let the developer off the hook and gave away millions of dollars in the form of a golf course that was originally approved almost 25 years ago. This is truly not the case. We will receive all the parks and recreation amenities originally approved and many more over time. But the main issue is the Town and its residents will have access to hundreds of acres of parkland that the Town could not afford to purchase if it was available. This land is a current and long-term asset that will allow residents of all ages to use and enjoy the space that had previously been restricted to golfers. These are not easy votes to cast but it is an example of how your Council works for what it believes is the best interest of the majority of Town residents.

As your Mayor, I will always be receptive to your comments, be they positive or critical. You may reach me at (301) 934-8421 or at home, (301) 934-4850.



Town Hall Closed

The Town Hall will be closed on the following days:

Presidents' Day
Good Friday

Monday, February 18, 2013
Friday, March 29, 2013

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
Hammad S. Matin 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

Website: 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 pick up 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 will resume in April on the first Satur-



CHARLES COUNTY
**HOUSEHOLD
HAZARDOUS WASTE
COLLECTION**

day of each month, 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, February 18, 2013

Friday, March 29, 2013

Yard Waste Pick Up

Monday, February 18, 2013

Friday, March 29, 2013

Trash will be picked up on:

Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Thursday, March 28, 2013

No Pick Up

No Pick Up



You must contact the Town if you are interested in a larger recycling container. At the encouragement of residents and the need to divert more waste away from the landfill the Town Council approved in the 2013 budget the purchase of 300,

95 gallon recycling containers. These containers are on wheels, with closing lids, painted blue and designated as recycling containers. The containers look similar to the recently distributed green trash containers. The containers are the property of the Town and stay with the property. They are assigned an ID number and are GEO-coded to your residence. If you would like to identify your container you may put a label with your house number or other identification on the inside lid of the container. These containers will continue to be picked up by Waste Management on Wednesdays and will collect co-mingled recycling materials (see www.townoflaplata.org under the

Sanitation tab for all acceptable recycling materials). The new recycling containers may be discretely stored in the front or on the side of the premises. If you are interested in receiving one of the containers or have additional questions please contact Mary Trollinger at the Public Works Department (301) 934-8421 or email mtrollinger@townoflaplata.org and one will be delivered to you. Quantities are limited to 300 on a first call, first serve basis. More may be ordered in the next budget year if the demand is great. Thank you for your interest and we hope to provide even more convenient service while improving efficiency.

FEBRUARY 2013

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

							1	2
						Yard Waste Pick Up		Groundhog Day 
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9
Yard Waste Pick Up	Yard Waste Pick Up	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.
Special Pick Up, please call by 4:00 pm on Feb. 1 to be put on list	Special Pick Up, please call by 4:00 pm on Feb. 1 to be put on list	Planning Commission Meeting: 7:00 p.m.	Crime Watch Council Meeting: 7:30 p.m.	Crime Watch Council Meeting: 7:30 p.m.	Crime Watch Council Meeting: 7:30 p.m.	Crime Watch Council Meeting: 7:30 p.m.	Crime Watch Council Meeting: 7:30 p.m.	Crime Watch Council Meeting: 7:30 p.m.
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16
Yard Waste Pick Up	Yard Waste Pick Up	Mayor and Council work session: 7:00 p.m.	Parks and Recreation Commission meeting: 5:00 p.m.	Happy Valentine's Day 	Yard Waste Pick Up			
Deadline to register to vote in Primary election: 4:00	Deadline to register to vote in Primary election: 4:00	Mayor and Council work session: 7:00 p.m.	Mayor and Council work session: 7:00 p.m.	Valentine's Day	Mayor and Council work session: 7:00 p.m.			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23
No Yard Waste Pick Up	No Yard Waste Pick Up	Mayor and Council work session: 7:00 p.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.	Design Review Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m.
Town Hall closed	Town Hall closed	Trash Pick Up for 2/18/13	Trash Pick Up for 2/18/13	Trash Pick Up for 2/18/13	Trash Pick Up for 2/18/13	Trash Pick Up for 2/18/13	Trash Pick Up for 2/18/13	Trash Pick Up for 2/18/13
No Trash Pick Up	No Trash Pick Up	Presidents' Day	Presidents' Day	Presidents' Day	Presidents' Day	Presidents' Day	Presidents' Day	Presidents' Day
24	25	26	27	28				
Yard Waste Pick Up	Yard Waste Pick Up	Mayor and Council Regular Meetings: 7:00 p.m.	Mayor and Council Regular Meetings: 7:00 p.m.	Mayor and Council Regular Meetings: 7:00 p.m.	Mayor and Council Regular Meetings: 7:00 p.m.	Mayor and Council Regular Meetings: 7:00 p.m.	Mayor and Council Regular Meetings: 7:00 p.m.	Mayor and Council Regular Meetings: 7:00 p.m.
Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.	Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.	Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.	Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.	Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.	Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.	Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.	Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.	Beautification Commission Meeting: 4:00 p.m.

BED RACES AT CELEBRATE LA PLATA!

The Town of La Plata will come together for a day of family fun at the annual Spring Festival, Celebrate La Plata on Saturday, April 27th. Enjoy a day of activities for children of all ages at Celebrate La Plata; face painting, displays, entertainment, refreshments for sale from local favorites and ever entertaining Bed Races!

On your mark, get set, go! Gather three of your friends, family or co-workers and sign up to participate in the Bed Races. Your team will race on La Grange Ave as the crowd cheers you on. We have made it even easier this year for you to join in the fun – no registration fee and the Town will provide all beds for the race. Teams may bring a decorated bed to display at the event. Each team must have four participants that are 16 years or older. Don't miss out on the chance to come dressed in team t-shirts or costumes to promote your business or organization. The annual bed race is a great way to do some marketing while having a lot of fun. Prizes will be awarded to the top teams and best team attire. See you at the starting line!

Join in the fun this year!

Fill out the interest form below to receive more information.

Your Name: _____

Teammate 1: _____

Teammate 2: _____

Teammate 3: _____

Contact email: _____

Contact number: _____

We are interested in racing
and making a display bed.

We just want to race!

Please return the form to:

Town of La Plata
Colleen Wilson, Special Events Coordinator
PO Box 2268
La Plata, MD 20646

Or email the information to cwilson@townoflaplata.org.



Photos from 2012 Bed Races.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WORKS

November is designated as “Municipal Government Works” month by the Maryland Municipal League. Elected officials are encouraged to visit 4th grade classes in their community to discuss the role of Mayor and municipal government with the students.

In November Mayor Hale also visited with over 100 4th grade students at Walter J. Mitchell Elementary School as part of “Municipal Government Works” month.

Mayor Hale (far right) visiting with Claudia Knudsen's 4th grade class at Grace Lutheran Church and School.



HOW LA PLATA GOT ITS NAME



In honor of La Plata's quinquicentennial (125 years since incorporation on April 4, 1888), below is a reprint of an article written in the Times Crescent newspaper dated April 12, 1978. The column was called Eleanor's Diary.

"This all started last summer, the idea of doing an article or two on 'How La Plata Got Its Name.' The thought, I must confess, was not mine but that of a friend, Katbryn 'Kittie' Newcomb, who had just returned from an extensive vacation (driving) through the Ozarks. To her surprise, about midway between Chillicothe and Hannibal (shades of Mark Twain and Tom Sawyer) and heading due north, she arrived at the Town of-- Hold on folks--La Plata, Missouri. That's where your mail goes when your friends neglect to make a firm 'D' on MD, and/or forget to use the zip code. Quite a coincidence!

"Well, Kittie said she and her son drove into the town and asked some directions of a gentleman they saw there. When he discovered they were from the only other city in the United States named La Plata, he was very interested and invited them to come as his guests to a Lion's Club Ladies night that evening. They hadn't really intended to stay, but how could they refuse such a warm offer? It was the beginning of a friendship between the two towns.

"La Plata, Missouri, has sent information on the choosing of its name, and it comes from the same source as ours. I'm going to, with Mrs. Newcomb's permission, lift bodily sections from her notes and also an article done by her for the Bicentennial Committee. I could paraphrase, but

the story is told so well. Since my friend gave me her permission, I should like to quote verbatim except where some small updating needs to be done (one article was written in 1975).

"Colonel Samuel Chapman, whose rank was obtained in the Continental Army, received a grant from the early Colonial Governors of 6,000 acres in the area of La Plata and Port Tobacco. 'Colonel Sam,' as he is referred to by the Chapman family, had several children, one of whom, a son, George, contracted tuberculosis. Hoping to improve his health, he took his son to Colorado for this malady. Here he remained for some months but later traveled with him to Central and South America. Records do not show where George died, but 'Colonel Sam' returned to his 6,000 acres in Charles County. His two remaining children were John Grant and Jane Etheldra, who married Morgan Harris and lived at Waverly.

"The manor house in which 'Colonel Sam' lived was located near the area where the new La Plata High School was built. The house was destroyed by a tornado on November 9, 1926, at which time the existing La Plata public elementary school located on the same property was also destroyed. (This house was occupied by the Della family at the time of its destruction). Thirteen school children were killed in this tragedy, nine of them in the third grade which was taught by Mrs. Ethel Graves Cooksey (Mrs. Fairfax Cooksey, Jr.). Mr. Edward Turner, former Curriculum Coordinator and Instruction Director of Charles County, was also injured in this tornado at the La Plata school site. A bronze plaque commemorates the loss of these children and is located at the front entrance of the present Milton Somers School.

"Colonel Sam" had been quite impressed with the beauty of South America during his travels, particularly with the La Plata River which the natives call 'river of silver.' One morning, upon arising at an early hour, he looked down some of the ravines surrounding his property here and they reminded him in appearance of 'a river of silver' with the early morning sunrise reflected in the dew upon the many cobwebs spun across the vegetation. He decided at that moment to name

this portion of the property 'La Plata' for the beautiful river he so much admired. La Plata was his winter home, while Glen Albin, also destroyed by fire in the 1920's was the summer residence.

"The property of Colonel Samuel Chapman became divided into four parts in the next generation of the Chapman family. The law of primo geniture gave to John Grant his father's inheritance and in the next generation it went to HIS four children. John Grant, who received Glen Albin; Andrew Grant, who received Normandy; Marshall Chapman, who inherited Ellenwood and Robert Fergusson, who inherited the La Plata portion.

"Dr. Robert Fergusson Chapman practiced medicine in New York City in the second half of the nineteenth century. Late in the century, Dr. Chapman came back to La Plata to live. He became very much interested in the development of the town that was growing around La Plata Station. When the town was laid out on a plat, he donated all of the land and the right of ways for the streets. He was also the first postmaster of the town. In his will he left the La Plata Farm to his son, if he produced an heir, otherwise the property was to revert back to the heirs of the other three-fourths of the original grant. This did occur and the Chapman family at Glen Albin, Ellenwood and Normandy acquired this land.

"A portion of the La Plata farm was sold by Mr. Henry Chapman, a descendant of Andrew Grant, and whose home was Normandy Farm, to the Board of Education for the site of the present La Plata High School, which building was completed and opened in September 1964. In 1980 this La Plata High School will be moved to the Radio Station Property and the present building will be renamed the Milton M. Somers Middle School.

"The present Walter Mitchell Elementary School is built on part of the land which was the old La Plata Farm.

"Now you know where the town of La Plata got its name. How romantic it is to live in a place called 'The River of Silver!'"

New Commercial Building Permits – issued 11/1/12-12/31/12

2 North La Plata Court – Affordable Storage
 226 Rosewick Road – One Main Financial
 101 Catalpa Drive – Micro-Bioretenion Area
 6770 Crain Highway – Pers Fitness Facility
 6770 Crain Highway – Ollie's Beauty Salon
 9375 Chesapeake Street, A-13 – Carmike

Commercial Occupancy Permits – issued 11/1/12-12/31/12

6370 Crain Highway – Roy Rogers
 105-F Drury Drive – Japan Express
 404 Charles Street – Illusions Salon
 115 La Grange Ave, #104 – Tax Consultants, LLC
 234 Rosewick Road – Qdoba
 103A St. Mary's Avenue – Alchemy-The Salon
 6790 Crain Highway – East Coast Tattoo

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:

Where do you walk most often?

In my neighborhood on the sidewalk

In my neighborhood on the street

In downtown La Plata

In a park

On a nearby trail

Don't walk

December Website Poll Results

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

What is the best way to generate revenue for essential Town services?

Property Taxes - 17%

User Fees for Services - 22%

Income Taxes - 6%

Fines - 17%

Licenses and Permits - 11%

Utility Franchise Fees - 0%

Sales Taxes - 6%

State and Federal Government Funding - 6%

Grants - 17%

Funding for municipal services must be equitable, reliable, and adequate to perform the essential services local government provides. Since the changes in the economy began in 2007 local government revenue has gone through some significant changes.

Some forms of revenue like licenses and permits are dependent on a strong economy, and when new construction slows, there is less permit and license revenue with reduced development activity within the Town. Even the traditionally stable revenue source of property tax has declined, because of the decline in property assessments in the community.

The Town utilizes a variety of different revenue sources to pay for its services, in an effort to not be dependent on one segment of the economy. Communities that are too dependent on property taxes may find that a decline in property values has a dramatic impact on its ability to provide services. Unlike other states, local government in Maryland does not collect a sales tax. Sales taxes are cyclical and trend very closely with consumer spending. Local government economies that rely heavily on sales taxes saw quick dramatic revenue declines when the economy turned. The State of Maryland saw a large impact to its budget, and even had to increase the sales tax rate.

The Town generates most of the revenue for the operation of the Sanitation, Water, Sewer, and Storm Water portions of its budget through User Fees for Services. These are not discretionary activities of the Town, and as such, the revenue to pay for the service must be dependable. To achieve that dependability, the Town charges a user fee to its customers for the sanitation and water services. That revenue is occasionally supplemented with grant revenue.

While the Town has been successful at securing quite a bit of grant revenue in the past few years, particularly as a result of federal stimulus, it is not a reliable revenue source. Grants often come with specific

conditions on their use, which don't always align with municipal service needs. Grants, when matched with local goals, can supplement traditional municipal revenue.

Fines are not a large source of revenue for local government in Maryland. Unlike other states, local government does not keep revenue that comes from moving violation citations. Those fines go to the State of Maryland. La Plata can keep fines collected from municipal citations, which are violations of the Town Code, however the revenue received from those do not even cover the cost of enforcement

Intergovernmental revenue from the State of Maryland has been significantly reduced. Fine revenue collected by the State is returned to local governments in the form of Police Aid, and Motor Vehicle Fuel taxes are distributed as Highway User Revenue to be used for road maintenance. Police Aid from the State is budgeted at just \$40,000 this fiscal year. That is a small portion of the \$1.75 million La Plata spends annually on Public Safety. Highway User Revenue is budgeted at just \$85,000, down from approximately \$450,000 in 2007.

With last year's lower property tax reassessments La Plata's largest revenue source is substantially lower for the next three years. The need to find efficiency in operations is as strong as ever. La Plata will need support from the community and new ideas and investment to maintain the service levels of today.

CHILD SAFETY SEAT INSPECTIONS



On December 4th a free child safety seat checkpoint was held at the La Plata Wal-Mart. Child Safety seat technicians from La Plata Police, Maryland State Police, and Civista were on hand to conduct the inspections. Members from the La Plata Police include Police Explorer Tyjon Johnson (far left) and PFC Thomas Johnston (far right). The La Plata Police currently has three certified child safety seat technicians. If you are interested in having your child safety seat installation checked by a technician you can call the La Plata Police Department at (301) 934-1500 to schedule an appointment.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Olde Tyme Holiday Gathering



The Town of La Plata ushered in the holiday season with the Olde Tyme Holiday Gathering on Sunday, December 2nd. Children enjoyed holiday crafts, face painting and story time from the Charles County Library. John the Fifer, Southern Mix Barbershop Chorus, and La Plata High School Vocal Department Holiday Sing-Along entertained the audience with holiday music. Santa made his

grand appearance to visit with children and hear their wishes for the holiday season. Thank you to all who attended and volunteered at the event!



Breakfast with Santa



Santa made one more stop at the Town Hall on Saturday, December 8th before heading back to the North Pole. Santa visited with each child and many photos were taken to remember the special day.



Councilman Joe Norris and Customer Service staff member Terri Fischer help deliver canned goods that were donated during the Santa Breakfast to the food pantry at Sacred Heart Church.

Stay tuned for the 2013 Special Events Calendar! Information will be posted on the Town's website in early March. Make sure to like our face book page so you can be one of the first to know what's happening in the Town. The town's official face book page is listed as Town of La Plata.

Outgoing Councilwoman Paddy Mudd thanked by Town Council



At the Town of La Plata December 18, 2012 Council meeting, Councilwoman Paretta "Paddy" Mudd submitted her intent to resign her Ward III council seat effective January 1, 2013 since she is moving to a new home outside her ward. Councilwoman Mudd has represented Ward III since being initially elected to the Council seat in May of 2005 and re-elected in May of 2009. Throughout her 7 years working for Ward III Mrs. Mudd has represented the

Town council on the Town's Beautification Commission and has played a most valuable role in the establishment of the Kent Avenue Corridor Crime Watch Program. A "Thank You" reception was held after the January 22 business meeting of the Town Council. Paddy was presented a framed Town of La Plata seal and other gifts as appreciation for her years of dedicated service to the Town.

2012 CITIZEN SURVEY

In November 2012, 1,200 households in the Town of La Plata were randomly asked to again participate in The National Citizen Survey. The National Citizen Survey for La Plata contains a menu of questions about services and community issues as well including several policy questions. The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results from jurisdictions across the United States.

Resident opinions offer elected officials an opportunity to identify challenges and to plan for and evaluate improvements and to sustain services and amenities for long-term success.

The survey results are used by the Town Council for community planning and resource allocation, program improvement, and policy making. This is the Town's fifth survey conducted over the past six years and the elected body has used previous surveys in evaluating services, assisting in the development of Council priorities and guiding them in making decisions regarding the budget.

La Plata is a great place to call home, and one aspect of home people value is the feeling of safety. In 2012 94% of survey respondents feel safe in their neighborhoods during the

day, 93% of respondents feel safe in La Plata's downtown area during the day. Public safety is a critical service provided by the Town so our residents don't have to live in fear of crime. La Plata's Police services and crime prevention are rated above the national benchmark, making them a source of pride for the community.

Basic utilities like water, sewer, and garbage collection are essential to daily life in La Plata. With the change last year in garbage collection, the Town is pleased to see that with 85% rating the service as excellent or good, garbage collection remains La Plata's top rated utility. Water and sewer services have increased since the first survey in January of 2008. Sewer went from 63% rating as excellent or good to 73% in 2012. Drinking water service went from 57% in 2008 to 70% today.

Community recreation scores remain much below the national benchmark with just 53% of respondents rating that service as excellent or good. Compared to national scores, much less of La Plata's population visit a neighborhood or Town park.

Each survey the Town asks some policy specific questions. In this survey, residents were

asked if they would support the installation of traffic cameras to deter speeding in school zones in La Plata. 56% of respondents supported the concept. The Town again asked residents whether they would support increasing property taxes to replace lost Highway User Revenue for road maintenance. The response was the same as 2010, with 38% of respondents supporting the idea.

The Town also asked residents to evaluate the importance of 12 of the Town's major initiatives. The three highest priority initiatives were Pedestrian Safety with 57% rating it a high priority, Roads with 41% rating it a high priority, and Sidewalk Maintenance with 36% rating it a high priority.

This is just a sampling of results from the survey. The complete survey with previous year results in regards to transportation, housing, land use & zoning, economic sustainability, public safety, environmental sustainability, parks and recreation, culture, arts and education, community inclusiveness, information and awareness, social engagement, resident priorities, and policy questions can all be viewed on the Town's website at www.townoflaplata.org under the section labeled Citizen Survey.

TOWN ELECTION 2013

Nomination for Candidacy packets are now available for download or pickup at Town Hall. The deadline for submittal of a completed nomination packet is Monday, March 4, 2013 by 4:00 p.m.

The Town will hold a Primary Election, Monday, March 18, 2013 if more than two (2) candidates file for any one of the five Town Council offices up for election. The General Election will be held on Tuesday,

May 7, 2013. Elections are held at La Plata Town Hall, 305 Queen Anne Street, between the hours of 12:00 noon and 8:00 p.m.

Eligibility to vote in Town Elections requires registration with the Board of Supervisors of Elections of Charles County or with the Board of Supervisors of Elections of the Town of La Plata supplemental registration. You must be registered to vote prior to Monday, February 11, 2013 to vote in the

Primary Election or by Monday, April 8, 2013 for the General Election.

Forms and information sheets can be located at the bottom of the Town Elections page on the Town web site www.townoflaplata.org, or for pickup at Town Hall. Please contact the Town Clerk by email dmandley@townoflaplata.org or phone (301) 934-8421, if you have any questions or need additional information.

WATER METER CUSTOMER PORTAL

Water customers can access information about their water use online. The installation of the Town's new Automated Metering Infrastructure system (AMI) is now complete. This system allows the Town to read the water meters automatically and gather data about water consumption to help track down leaks. The Town currently monitors the water system for long leaks, where water runs through a meter for 96 straight hours. The system can send out email alerts about abnormal consumption or potential leaks

based on defined parameters.

Customers may now access the new customer portal that will allow viewing of individual meter consumption data online and also receive the email alerts. Each customer will be able to see their hourly, daily, weekly, and monthly consumption data on a 24 hour delayed basis. Each meter transmits use data to the network overnight from the previous period. This information will help customers manage their water usage and help with water conservation practices.

If you are interested accessing the customer portal please call Town Hall at (301) 934-8421. Town staff will help you set up your account and have the system issue a user name and password. It will be necessary to have online access and be able to receive email to set up the account. A customer having direct access to their consumption information helps them to manage use, and potentially catch leaks in the home sooner. Thank you for your support with this project.

TOWN OF LA PLATA

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



Southern Maryland Martial Arts

Happy New Year to All! We want to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who has supported Southern Maryland Martial Arts (SMMA) over the years. The La Plata Taekwondo school, located at 50 Drury Drive, has recently undergone significant changes. The recently

renovated martial arts school is now under new ownership and instruction by Mr. Jeremy Gray. Mr. Gray is a 3rd degree black belt in Tang Soo Do and 5th degree black belt in Taekwondo. He is the chief instructor and owner of both Bryans Road and La Plata Southern Maryland Martial Art schools.

Mr. Gray brings with him over 25 years of martial arts experience, as well as highly qualified martial arts instructors and support staff. He welcomes you join him for an open house on February 17, 2013 from 2-4pm at the La Plata

school. Please bring your children, tour the facility and pick up SMMA's latest school calendar for class schedules. Mr. Gray will be offering an open house introductory discount to those who sign up for classes. Also, be sure to enter the raffle to win a one month free membership to either location.

We look forward to meeting you and welcoming you to Southern Maryland Martial Arts. Contact SMMA at (301) 934-3699, www.smtkd.com, or www.facebook.com/somdmartialarts.