



**TOWN OF LA PLATA  
Board of Appeals Minutes**

April 1, 2026, 6:00 PM

Regular Meeting

Council Chambers, La Plata Town Hall

305 Queen Anne St.

La Plata MD

**PRESENT:** Mark Thorn  
Jonathan Burruss

**ABSENT:** Chair Hugh Williams

**TOWN STAFF:** Todd Pounds, Town Attorney  
Don Dooley, Director of Planning  
Kelly Phipps, Director of Legislative Services  
Deborah Simpson, Planner I  
Kenar Johnson, Senior Planner  
Shelby Pritchett, Town Clerk

**GUESTS:** Lewis B. Jenkins Jr., Counsel for Oakwood, LLC  
Staci Lagana, Lorenzi, Dodds & Gunnill, Inc.  
Lloyd "Spence" Bowling Jr., Wicomico Development Corporation

1. Call to Order

1.1. Meeting Attendance and Decorum

Attendees, please use meeting courtesy. Virtual attendees are asked to mute their microphones when joining the meeting. Participants may be muted by the Town Clerk, and meetings will be recorded.

In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, the public has the right to view/listen to the discussion only. Written comments may be submitted in advance via email to [Legislative@townoflaplata.org](mailto:Legislative@townoflaplata.org). Individuals wishing to address the Board of Appeals may sign up in advance on the Town's website (Public Communications) or on the meeting sign-up sheet.

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 254 916 092 903 33

Passcode: 3pd6yZ9X

In accordance with the Code of Maryland, General Provisions, Section 3-302 (Open Meetings Act), notice is hereby given that a portion of this meeting may be held in closed session.

Acting Chair Jonathan Burruss called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1.2. Pledge of Allegiance

Acting Chair Burruss led all assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 1.3. Roll Call

The Town Clerk conducted Roll Call.

## 2. Approval of Minutes

### 2.1. Approval of minutes from the meeting on December 15, 2025.

Thorn moved to approve the minutes as presented.

Moved By: Mark Thorn, seconded by Jonathan Burruss.

Ayes: None

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Chair Williams

**Passed**

## 3. Public Hearing - Case #VAR-0001-2025 (8 Kent Avenue)

Planning Dept Case #VAR-0001-2025, 8 Kent Avenue, Application for Variance; Continued from December 15, 2025

Summary: Variance VAR-0001-2025 is a request to construct a new 7'11" x 10'4" elevator shaft with a 4'0" setback from the southern side yard property line in lieu of the required ten feet in the Commercial Business (CB) Zone.

### 3.1. Review of Public Hearing Procedures (Town Clerk)

The Town Clerk conducted a review of the public hearing procedures.

### 3.2. Call to Order (Presiding Officer/Chair)

Acting Chair Burruss called the public hearing to order at 6:03 PM.

### 3.3. Review of Public Notices (Town Clerk)

The Town Clerk presented a review of the public notices.

### 3.4. Summary of Town Staff Report and Recommendation

Deborah Simpson, Planner I, presented the staff report, including a recommendation for the denial of VAR-0001-2025, 8 Kent Ave.

### 3.5. Applicant/Petitioner Presentation and Testimony

Acting Chair Burrus swore in Lewis B. Jenkins Jr., Staci Lagana, and Lloyd "Spence" Bowling, requiring them to affirm that they would respond with the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Staci Lagana delivered a PowerPoint presentation and testimony on behalf of the applicant.

### 3.6. Questions from the Board to the Applicant/Petitioner or Town Staff

The Board of Appeals directed questions to the applicants' representatives, Lewis B. Jenkins Jr., Staci Lagana, and Lloyd "Spence" Bowling, as well as to Director Dooley.

### 3.7. Written Documents are Entered into the Record

Written testimony may be submitted in advance via email to [legislative@townoflaplata.org](mailto:legislative@townoflaplata.org) or postal mail to Legislative Services Department, Town of La Plata, 305 Queen Anne St Box 2268, La Plata MD 20646, and must be received no later than 12:00 PM, two business days prior to the scheduled meeting.

Written documents for the record will be presented to the presiding officer prior to the opening of the public hearing.

The Town Clerk reported that written documents had been submitted, consisting of a letter from Wayne Wilkerson and a letter from Lloyd "Spence" Bowling.

### 3.8. Public Comment

- Speakers (signed up) are called on by the presiding officer.
- Those wishing to provide in-person testimony may sign up in advance no later than 3:00 PM on the day of the public hearing via the [town webpage](#), or upon arrival at the Council Chambers via sign-up sheet.
- Speakers who register in advance will be recognized prior to speakers who register upon arrival at the public hearing.
- In-person registration to speak will end when the relevant public hearing is opened.
- At the discretion of the presiding officer, time may be limited to 3 minutes and may not be yielded.

No public speakers were present at this meeting.

### 3.9. Additional Questions from the Board

The Board of Appeals had no further questions.

### 3.10. Closing of Public Hearing

When the hearing is concluded, the Board will not hear further comments or questions during the meeting.

Acting Chair Burruss concluded the public hearing at 7:00 PM.

## 4. Motion for a Closed Session

#### 4.1. Motion for a Closed Session

Tentatively Scheduled at the Discretion of the Board and Town Attorney

STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO CLOSE SESSION: State Government Article §3-305(b) (7) To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

Reason for Closure: Discussion involves privileged attorney-client communications regarding legal risks and strategy not appropriate for public disclosure.

Subject: Case Number VAR-0001-2025

Thorn moved that the Board of Appeals enter closed session at 7:00 PM.

Moved By: Mark Thorn, seconded by Jonathan Burruss.

Ayes: Thorn, Burruss

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Chair Williams

**Passed**

The Board of Appeals returned from closed session at 7:09 PM.

#### 5. Deliberations Regarding Application

##### 5.1. Findings of the Board

Acting Chair Burruss moved to deny VAR-0001-2025.

Moved By: Jonathan Burruss, seconded by Mark Thorn.

Ayes: Thorn, Burruss

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Chair Williams

**Passed**

#### 6. Public Hearing - Case #VAR-0002-2025 (603 Washington Avenue)

Planning Dept Case #VAR-0002-2025, 603 Washington Avenue, Application for Variance

Summary: Variance VAR-002-2025 is a request to approve the installation of a 2,059 square foot accessory structure (ground-mount solar array) in the front yard of an existing single-family dwelling.

##### 6.1. Call to Order (Presiding Officer/Chair)

Acting Chair Burruss called the public hearing to order at 7:23 PM.

## 6.2. Review of Public Notices (Town Clerk)

The Town Clerk presented a review of the public notices.

## 6.3. Summary of Town Staff Report and Recommendation

Director Dooley presented the staff report and recommendation to approve VAR-0002-2025, 603 Washington Ave.

## 6.4. Applicant/Petitioner Presentation and Testimony

Neither the applicants for VAR-0002-2025 nor their representatives were present at the meeting.

## 6.5. Questions from the Board to the Applicant/Petitioner or Town Staff

Director Dooley answered questions from the Board of Appeals.

## 6.6. Written Documents are Entered into the Record

Written testimony may be submitted in advance via email to [legislative@townoflaplata.org](mailto:legislative@townoflaplata.org) or postal mail to Legislative Services Department, Town of La Plata, 305 Queen Anne St Box 2268, La Plata MD 20646, and must be received no later than 12:00 PM, two business days prior to the scheduled meeting.

Written documents for the record will be presented to the presiding officer prior to the opening of the public hearing.

The Clerk reported that written documents had been submitted, consisting of emails from Mark Abell and Tara Goodman.

## 6.7. Public Comment

- Speakers (signed up) are called on by the presiding officer.
- Those wishing to provide in-person testimony may sign up in advance no later than 3:00 PM on the day of the public hearing via the [town webpage](#), or upon arrival at the Council Chambers via sign-up sheet.
- Speakers who register in advance will be recognized prior to speakers who register upon arrival at the public hearing.
- In-person registration to speak will end when the relevant public hearing is opened.
- At the discretion of the presiding officer, time may be limited to 3 minutes and may not be yielded.

Acting Chair Burrus swore in Robin Sprague and David Winkler separately, requiring them to affirm that they would respond with the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Robin Sprague and David Winkler provided public comment in opposition to VAR-0002-2025. Robin Sprague provided a letter and photos to Director Phipps to be entered into the public record.

## 6.8. Additional Questions from the Board

The Board of Appeals asked additional questions of Director Dooley regarding VAR-0002-2025.

## 6.9. Closing of Public Hearing

When the hearing is concluded, the Board will not hear further comments or questions during the meeting.

Acting Chair Jonathan Burruss concluded the public hearing at 8:14 PM.

## 7. Motion for a Closed Session

### 7.1. Motion for a Closed Session

Tentatively Scheduled at the Discretion of the Board and Town Attorney

STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO CLOSE SESSION: State Government Article §3-305(b) (7) To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

Reason for Closure: Discussion involves privileged attorney-client communications regarding legal risks and strategy not appropriate for public disclosure.

Subject: Case Number VAR-0002-2025

Thorn moved to enter closed session at 8:15 PM.

Moved By: Mark Thorn, seconded by Jonathan Burruss.

Ayes: Thorn, Burruss

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Chair Williams

**Passed**

The Board of Appeals returned from closed session at 8:31 PM.

## 8. Deliberations Regarding Application

### 8.1. Findings of the Board

The Board of Appeals presented the findings that the applicant is required to attend the Board of Appeals meeting on May 27, 2026, and will be presented with a conditional variance approval, including stipulations of the installation of screening within 180 days, with growth potential of 7' within two years in a zig-zag pattern along both roadways. Failure to meet the conditions will require the applicant to remove the solar panels at their own expense, and the variance will be denied.

Burruss moved to approve the findings as stated.

Moved By: Jonathan Burruss, seconded by Mark Thorn.

Ayes: Thorn, Burruss

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Chair Williams

**Passed**

9. Other Business

The Town Clerk advised Acting Chair Jonathan Burruss that there was no other business for discussion.

10. Adjourn

10.1. Adjournment

Acting Chair Burruss moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 PM.

Moved By: Jonathan Burruss, seconded by Mark Thorn.

Ayes: None

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Chair Williams

**Passed**

Submitted by:

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Shelby Pritchett, Town Clerk

**From:** [Don Dooley](#)  
**To:** [Tara Goodman](#)  
**Cc:** [Legislative](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Case Number: Variance (VAR) 0002-2025  
**Date:** Thursday, April 2, 2026 11:08:41 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)

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Hello Ms. Goodman:

Thank you for your clarification. Today's e-mail (April 2, 2026) from you (below) will be made part of the public record. However, your prior email cannot be redacted from the public record regardless of your intent. All information received by the Town is part of the public record.

Kind regards,

Don



*Don Dooley* **MPA, MHP**  
**Director of Planning**  
Town of La Plata  
305 Queen Anne Street  
La Plata, Maryland 20646  
Phone: 240.682.7509  
[ddooley@townoflaplata.org](mailto:ddooley@townoflaplata.org)

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**From:** Tara Goodman <tara.goodman@beazer.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 2, 2026 10:28 AM  
**To:** Don Dooley <ddooley@townoflaplata.org>  
**Cc:** Legislative <Legislative@townoflaplata.org>  
**Subject:** RE: Case Number: Variance (VAR) 0002-2025

You don't often get email from [tara.goodman@beazer.com](mailto:tara.goodman@beazer.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

**CAUTION: This email originated from OUTSIDE of the Town of La Plata email system. If the senders name displayed is a Town user, it is NOT legitimate and should be deleted immediately. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are certain this is a legitimate message.**

Good morning Don,

After reviewing yesterday's agenda and meeting minutes, I would like to clarify that my original email below was not an official statement, but a question regarding the process and options.

Accordingly, I am requesting that my name and email address be redacted from the case.

Please advise as soon as possible.

Thanks,  
Tara Goodman

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**From:** Don Dooley <[ddooley@townoflaplata.org](mailto:ddooley@townoflaplata.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 30, 2026 3:31 PM  
**To:** Tara Goodman <[tara.goodman@beazer.com](mailto:tara.goodman@beazer.com)>  
**Cc:** Legislative <[Legislative@townoflaplata.org](mailto:Legislative@townoflaplata.org)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: Case Number: Variance (VAR) 0002-2025

Dear Ms. Goodman:

As part of open government, all information submitted to the town of La Plata regarding a public hearing matter becomes part of the public record and is disclosed to the Board of Appeals.

I hope this helps address your question.

Best,

Don



*Don Dooley* MPA, MHP  
**Director of Planning**  
Town of La Plata  
305 Queen Anne Street

La Plata, Maryland 20646  
Phone: 240.682.7509  
[ddooley@townoflaplata.org](mailto:ddooley@townoflaplata.org)

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**From:** Tara Goodman <[tara.goodman@beazer.com](mailto:tara.goodman@beazer.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 30, 2026 1:41 PM  
**To:** Don Dooley <[ddooley@townoflaplata.org](mailto:ddooley@townoflaplata.org)>  
**Subject:** Case Number: Variance (VAR) 0002-2025

You don't often get email from [tara.goodman@beazer.com](mailto:tara.goodman@beazer.com). [Learn why this is important \[aka.ms\]](#)

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Hi Don,

I received the public hearing notice regarding the solar panels at 603 Washington Avenue. I am unable to attend the hearing, due to prior commitments, but I was hoping there'd be a way for me to voice my concerns anonymously. I'm their neighbor and not in favor of the panels, but do not wish to stir up any negative feelings between neighbors. Is there a way for me to do that before Wednesday, the 1<sup>st</sup>?

I look forward to hearing from you!



**Tara Goodman**

*Sr. New Home Information Manager*

Maryland - Delaware

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6085 Marshalee Dr., Elkridge, MD 21075 | 667.701.2294

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From: Robyn rsprague8@gmail.com  
Subject: VARIANCE 002-2025  
Date: Apr 1, 2026 at 11:48:54 AM  
To: Robyn Love Sprague rsprague8@gmail.com

Board of Appeals  
Town of La Plata  
305 Queen Anne Street  
La Plata, MD 20646

Re: VARIANCE 002-2025

Dear Members of the Board of Appeals,

I am ~~writing~~<sup>ing</sup> to formally express my opposition to Variance 002-2025 regarding the installation of a commercial-scale, ground-mounted solar array in a front yard within the Town of La Plata.

First and foremost, my position is not opposition to renewable energy. I strongly support responsible and appropriately placed solar development. However, I am equally committed to preserving the integrity of our town's zoning code and the historic character that defines our community.

#### Preservation of Historic Character

The value of a historic district lies in its visual continuity and cohesive identity. Introducing industrial-scale equipment into a front yard disrupts the carefully maintained "sense of place" that the town has worked to preserve over many years. Ground-mounted solar arrays are inherently industrial in appearance and are visually incompatible with the architectural character of historic homes.

Additionally, front yards contribute significantly to the public-facing

“streetscape.” Altering them with large-scale mechanical structures interrupts the visual rhythm of the neighborhood. This not only diminishes aesthetic harmony but may also negatively impact property values, which are closely tied to the consistency and protections afforded by historic zoning regulations.

### Public Safety and Liability Concerns

A ground-mounted solar installation in a residential front yard presents several safety risks, particularly if not properly enclosed. These include:

- High-voltage electrical hazards, as residential arrays can produce between 300V and 600V DC
- The potential classification as an “attractive nuisance,” drawing children to climb or interact with the structure
- Glare and reflection that may distract drivers, creating a roadway hazard during peak sunlight hours

fence

Without proper safeguards, these risks extend beyond the property owner and affect the broader community.

### Precedent and Zoning Integrity

Granting this variance creates a concerning precedent. Zoning regulations depend on consistent enforcement. If an exception is made for a front-yard solar array, it weakens the town’s ability to deny future requests for other industrial or energy-related structures, such as wind turbines or large battery storage units.

This “slippery slope” risks turning clear zoning rules into optional guidelines,

leading to inconsistent development and erosion of neighborhood standards.

**Administrative Accountability and Equity**

The town has a responsibility to uphold its own regulations to maintain public trust. If current codes prohibit front-yard installations, then allowing this project represents a failure of due diligence that should be corrected.

Equally important is fairness. Zoning codes are intended to be applied consistently and equitably. Granting this variance raises concerns about selective enforcement and favoritism. I respectfully request transparency on whether similar applications have been denied in the past, and if so, why this case is being treated differently.

In closing, I urge the Board to deny Variance 002-2025. This is not a rejection of renewable energy, but a call to uphold the integrity of our zoning code, preserve the historic character of our town, and ensure that regulations are applied fairly and consistently to all residents.

The Town of La Plata has a responsibility to correct this oversight—not only to protect the visual and historical fabric of our community, but to reinforce the principle that our rules apply equally to everyone.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Robyn Sprague**  
**602 Washington Avenue**  
**LaPlata, MD**

*pictures of  
huge panel  
day or night  
as well as view of  
my home*

*not visible from  
Wash Ave  
or Hawthorne*  
*inconsistency of approval process*

I am requesting <sup>immediate</sup> termination of Debbie Simpson who <sup>haphazardly</sup> ~~approved~~ approved a project she did not have the authority to do so.

Administrative Accountability and Equity

The town has a responsibility to uphold its own regulations to maintain public trust. If current codes prohibit front-yard installations, then allowing this project represents a failure of due diligence that should be corrected.

Chair Williams - absent

Equally important is fairness. Zoning codes are intended to be applied consistently and equitably. Granting this variance raises concerns about selective enforcement and favoritism. I respectfully request transparency on whether similar applications have been denied in the past, and if so, why this case is being treated differently.

In closing, I urge the Board to deny Variance 002-2022. This is not a rejection of renewable energy, but a call to uphold the integrity of our zoning code, preserve the historic character of our town, and ensure that regulations are applied fairly and consistently to all residents.

The Town of La Plata has a responsibility to correct this oversight--not only to protect the visual and historical fabric of our community, but to reinforce the principle that our rules apply equally to everyone.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Robyn Sprague  
602 Washington Avenue  
La Plata, MD



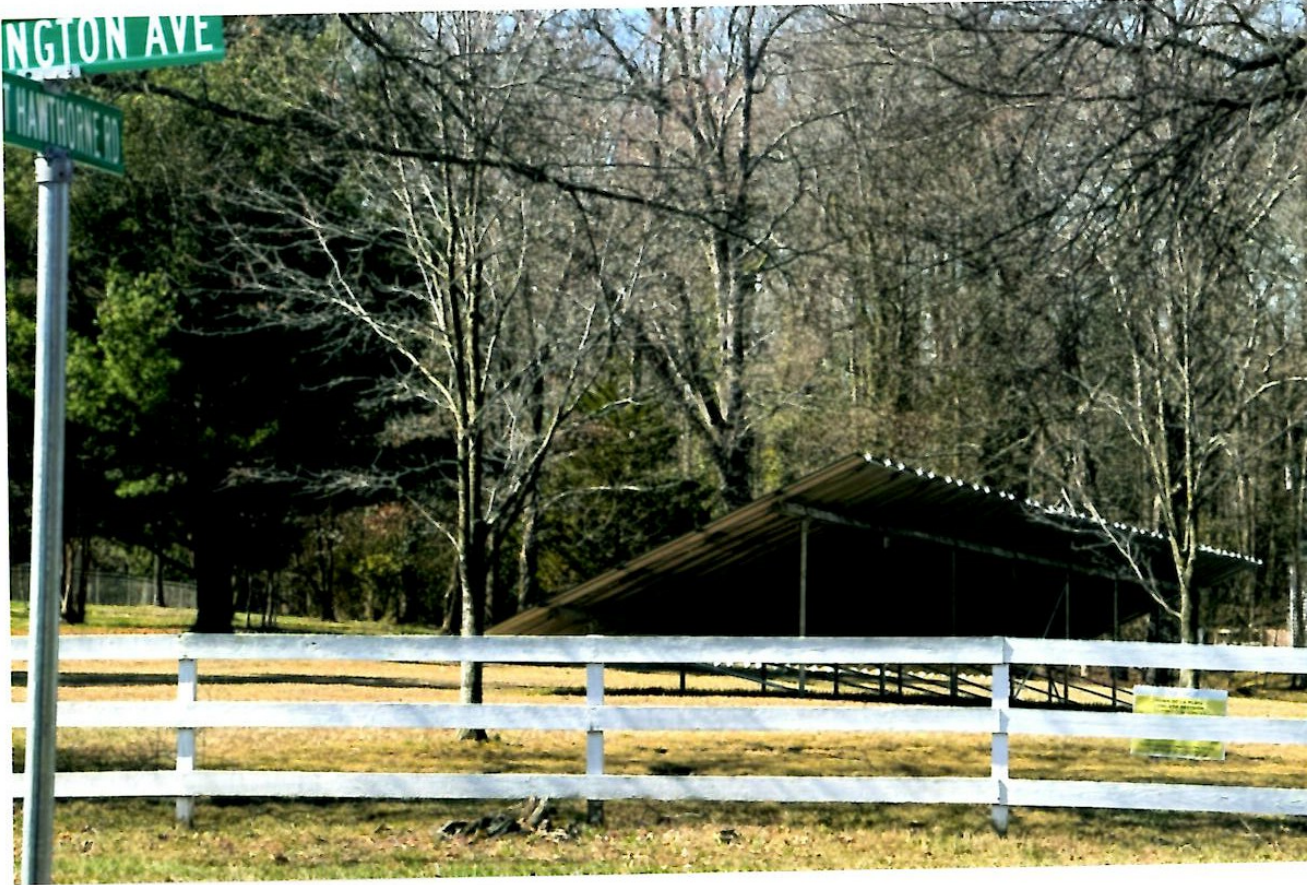
moonlight glow



The view of 602  
from 603



3 large  
High Voltage units



"sign" hidden behind  
fence  
not visible @ all



View from 602  
looking @ 603



View from <sup>602</sup> my driveway



2 signs not visible  
to passerby because  
they are located  
behind the fence  
@ 603



Variance Sign  
001-2025

Extremely  
Visible



Variance sign  
001-2025

Extremely  
Visible