



**Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
July 7, 2026, 6:00 PM
Council Chambers, La Plata Town Hall
305 Queen Anne St.
La Plata MD**

Agenda

1. Call to Order

- 1.1. Attendees, please use meeting courtesy. Virtual attendees are asked to mute 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. At their discretion, the Planning Commission may allow participants to voice questions or provide comments on the topics under discussion. Written comments may be submitted via e-mail to Legislative@townoflaplata.org. Members of the public wishing to address the Planning Commission in person may sign up in advance via the [town webpage](#) or upon arrival at the Council Chamber.

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 228 255 787 294 15

Passcode: t729yv36

(Calendar Year 2026)

1.2. Call to Order

2. Roll Call and Quorum Verification

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Ex Parte Disclosure

5. Approval of Minutes

- 5.1. Approval of minutes from the meeting on June 02, 2026.

6. Matters of Discussion

- 6.1. Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA 03-2026) Proposed Water Conservation Ordinance

6.2. Reschedule the Planning Commission meeting on August 4, 2026.

7. Public Comment

8. Matters of Information

8.1. Staff Report

8.2. Town Council Report

9. Adjourn

9.1. Adjournment



TOWN OF LA PLATA
Planning Commission Minutes

June 2, 2026, 6:00 PM

Regular Meeting

Council Chambers, La Plata Town Hall

305 Queen Anne St.

La Plata MD

- PRESENT:** Chair Dawn Banks
Councilman Paul Guttenberg
Kyle Miller
Emily Whale
Benjamin Ford
- ABSENT:** Vice Chair Jill Hudnell
- TOWN STAFF:** Don Dooley, Director of Planning
Shelby E. Pritchett, Town Clerk
- GUESTS:** Puskar Kar, Brudis & Associates (virtual)

1. Call to Order

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[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 228 255 787 294 15

Passcode: t729yv36

(Calendar Year 2026)

1.2. Call to Order

Chair Banks called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Roll Call and Quorum Verification

The Town Clerk conducted Roll Call. Chair Banks noted that Commissioner Ford, Alternate member, was present and voting in the absence of Vice Chair Hudnell.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Councilman Guttenberg led all assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Ex Parte Disclosure

The Planning Commission members reported no ex parte disclosures.

5. Public Hearing

5.1. Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 02-2026- Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance - Roads

Applicant: Town of La Plata, Maryland

Owner: N/A

Project Location: Town-wide

Request: To amend Article X (Adequate Public Facilities Requirements) in Chapter 191 (Zoning) of the La Plata Municipal Code for the purpose of creating, managing, and maintaining adequate public road facilities in the Town of La Plata.

Chair Banks read the details of Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 02-2026 - Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance - Roads as presented on agenda item 5.1.

5.2. Review of Purpose and Procedures for Public Hearing (Town Clerk)

The Town Clerk read the Public Hearing Purpose and Procedures verbatim.

5.3. Call to Order (Presiding Officer/ Chair)

The Public Hearing commenced at 6:03 PM.

5.4. Review of Public Notices (Town Clerk)

The Town Clerk conducted a review of the public notices.

5.5. Review of Sign-In Sheets (Town Clerk)

The Town Clerk advised Chair Banks that no speakers had signed up to speak.

5.6. Presentation by Staff

Director Dooley gave a brief staff report, including the updates and public comments made to Zoning Text Amendment 02-2026, which recommended that the Planning Commission adopt the draft Planning Commission Resolution.

5.7. Planning Commission Questions and Comments

Director Dooley received feedback and answered questions from the Planning Commission with the assistance of Puskar Kar, Brudis & Associates.

5.8. 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. Written comments were attached to the agenda prior to the start of the meeting and addressed as part of the staff brief from Director Dooley given during agenda item 5.6.

5.9. Applicant Rebuttal

No additional comment was given.

5.10. Planning Commission Discussion

No additional discussion.

5.11. Applicant Closing Statements

No additional closing statements.

5.12. Closing of Public Hearing

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

Chair Banks closed the Public Hearing at 6:49 PM.

Miller moved to adopt draft Planning Commission Resolution 26-04, recommending that the Town Council reviews and approves the zoning text amendment (ZTA 02-2026).

Moved By: Kyle Miller, seconded by Emily Whale.

Ayes: Chair Banks, Councilman Guttenberg, Miller, Whale, Ford

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Vice Chair Hudnell

Passed

6. Approval of Minutes

6.1. Approval of minutes from meeting on May 5, 2026.

Whale moved to approve the minutes as presented.

Moved By: Emily Whale, seconded by Paul Guttenberg.

Ayes: Chair Banks, Councilman Guttenberg, Miller, Whale, Ford

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Vice Chair Hudnell

Passed

7. Matters of Discussion

7.1. Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA 03-2026) Proposed Water Conservation Ordinance

Director Dooley delivered a PowerPoint presentation outlining the proposed Zoning Text Amendment 03-2026 and answered questions from the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission and Director Dooley agreed to complete a working session review during the next

regular Planning Commission meeting on July 7, 2026, and select a sub-committee following.

7.2. 2025 Annual Report

8. Public Comment

No public speakers were present at this meeting.

9. Matters of Information

9.1. Staff Report

Director Dooley advised the Planning Commission of upcoming projects expected for presentation to the Commission.

9.2. Town Council Report

Councilman Guttenberg stated nothing to report.

10. Adjourn

10.1. Adjournment

Chair Banks adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Submitted by:

Shelby Pritchett, Town Clerk



TOWN OF LA PLATA
305 Queen Anne Street
Post Office Box 2268
La Plata, Maryland 20646

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: July 7, 2026

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Don Dooley, Planning Director

PREPARED BY: Don Dooley, Planning Director

APPLICATON NO.: Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026 – Water Conservation

APPLICANT: Town of La Plata, Maryland

OWNER: N/A

PROJECT LOCATION: Town-wide

REQUEST: To add Article XI (Water Conservation and Emergency Restrictions) to Chapter 191 (Zoning) of the La Plata Municipal Code for the purpose of providing regulatory provisions for water conservation measures and emergency restrictions on water use as well as to amend Chapter 191-48 (Landscaping) of the La Plata Municipal Code for the purpose of facilitating water conservation measures related to the installation of new landscaping for residential and non-residential developments.

BACKGROUND

On April 28, 2026, the Town Council voted to ordain (adopt) the zoning text amendments recommended by the Planning Commission on April 7, 2026, under Zoning Text Amendment 01-2026 for the purpose of creating provisions for Adequate Public Facilities pertaining to water, sewage and school seating capacity. Staff believes it is now appropriate to consider developing a complementary ordinance addressing water conservation use, particularly in the event of a State declared drought.

Staff presented the Town Council with a conceptual draft of the ordinance for their initial feedback during their regularly scheduled meeting of April 28, 2026. The Council expressed interest in the water conservation ordinance and directed it to be formally reviewed by the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the Town Council.

**Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026 – Water Conservation
Planning Commission Meeting of July 7, 2026**

The initial draft ordinance is now being presented to the Planning Commission under Zoning Text Amendment 03-2026.

Planning Commission Meeting of June 2, 2026

At the Planning Commission Meeting of June 2, 2026, the Commission concurred with staff that the development of water-conservation standards are not intended to be intrusive or detrimental to residents' quality of life, nor are they meant to introduce measures that are impractical to implement. Rather, the Commission seeks to promote reasonable and effective practices that support the Town's long-term water sustainability goals. In particular, the Commission recognizes the importance of responsible water use to help La Plata remain within the allocation limits established by the Maryland Department of the Environment, especially during periods of drought when conservation becomes most critical. Therefore, careful development of a water conservation ordinance is imperative.

To give the Commission time to conduct their own research on potential water conservation measures that may be appropriate for the Town of La Plata, the Commission voted to continue Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026 to their next regularly scheduled meeting of July 7, 2026. The continuance will enable the Commission to engage in a more informed and robust discussion on water-conservation issues and measures. Based on the Commission's collective feedback, a Planning Commission Subcommittee is anticipated to be organized to work with Town staff on further developing the nascent water conservation text proposed in Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026. Once refined, the revised draft ordinance will be brought back to a future Planning Commission meeting for further discussion and evaluation for a future recommendation to the Town Council.

DISCUSSION

The Town of La Plata is approaching its permitted groundwater withdrawal limit, with water usage already around 90% of its allowed daily average. Because the Maryland Department of the Environment ("MDE") will not expand the Town's groundwater permit without a supplemental water source, the Town is in the process of advancing a three-part water management strategy that includes:

1. Negotiating a supplemental water agreement with Charles County;
2. Creating Adequate Public Facilities standards; and,
3. Adopting formal water-conservation policies (the subject of this report).

Under Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026, two sets of draft code amendments are proposed. A summary of the conceptual, draft, changes are as follows:

1. Chapter 191 (Zoning), Section 191.48. – Landscaping

Staff suggests revising portions of Sections 191.48(A) and (B) (Landscaping) to include the following provisions:

- The landscape standards will apply to all new residential and non-residential developments subject to a major or minor site plan, preliminary plat map approval or when replacing on-site landscaping for a specific area on a property.
- The use of native and drought-tolerant plants;
- Limiting high water use turf where installed on a property;
- Improve soil preparation for new landscaping to retain water;
- The use of two to three inches of mulch for new planting beds as standard landscape installation protocol;
- New irrigation systems, where proposed, must have rain shutoff sensors and no overspray onto pavement to improve irrigation efficiency.
- All required landscape plans that require Town approval shall demonstrate compliance with the proposed draft revisions in Section 191-48(B).

2. Proposed Article XI, Section 191 (Zoning) – Water Conservation and Emergency Restrictions

A. Purpose, Applicability, and Definitions

- The purpose of this section is to help conserve potable water during periods of high use, drought, or limited supply while still protecting the public’s health and safety.
- The ordinance will apply to every property connected to the Town’s water system.
- A definition has been drafted to address a “Designated Large-Volume User” as any non-residential or mixed-use property with very high or continuous water demand. This includes users averaging 10,000 gallons per day, using 300,000 gallons in a single billing cycle, or having substantial process-related usage (e.g., manufacturing, cooling, hospitals, campuses, large irrigated commercial sites). The designation is based on actual water use or operational needs.

B. Declaration and Rescission of Water Conservation Alert

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Town Manager may declare a Water Conservation Alert when water production reaches 80% of its permitted capacity or when a drought is declared by the State of Maryland.
- The Town must notify the public using reasonable methods such as the website and social media.
- The drought alert ends when production drops below the threshold or drought conditions end, with public notification of the rescission.

C. Mandatory Outdoor Watering Limitations Under a Water Conservation Alert

- Address-based schedule: Outdoor watering may only be on assigned days. Specifically, even-numbered addresses on even dates, odd-numbered addresses on odd dates.
- Time limits: Watering is allowed only between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m.
- Hand-watering exception: Reasonable hand-watering of landscaping with a shutoff nozzle is allowed anytime to prevent the loss of landscaping.
- Severe shortage: During more extreme shortages, the CEO/Town Manager may temporarily prohibit all landscape irrigation.

D. Prohibition of Non-Essential Water Use

- No washing of hard surfaces like sidewalks or driveways unless needed for health or safety.
- No personal vehicle washing except at commercial car washes that recycle water.

E. Recreational and Decorative Water Use

- Pools and hot tubs: Filling or refilling is prohibited; topping off is allowed only as needed to protect equipment. Public/Commercial pools may top off for health reasons with written notice to the Town.
- Fountains and decorative features: Must use re-circulating systems; non-recirculating features must be turned off.

F. Large-Volume Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Users

- Reduction requirement: The CEO/Town Manager may require designated Large-Volume Users to reduce water consumption by a specific percentage during a drought alert.
- Compliance verification: The Town will check usage through metered data and billing.
- Non-compliance: The user must submit and carry out a water-reduction plan using recognized conservation practices.

G. Emergency and Health/Safety Exemptions

- Water used for fire suppression, public health, or emergency operations is exempt from restrictions.

H. Relationship with Alternative Systems

**Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026 – Water Conservation
Planning Commission Meeting of July 7, 2026**

- Systems like graywater, reclaimed water, or stormwater reuse are allowed if they meet regulations, but using them does not exempt anyone from conservation restrictions.

I. Enforcement; Penalties

- Violations are municipal infractions under §186-22.
- Each day of violation counts as a separate offense.
- The Town may give a warning first; fines escalate (e.g., \$50 first offense, \$100 second, 200 thereafter) or as set by resolution.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission provide its collective feedback on the draft water conservation ordinance and establish a Planning Commission Subcommittee to work with staff in further refining and developing appropriate language for the draft water-conservation provisions contained in Zoning Text Amendment 03-2026.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Draft Text Amendment to Chapter 191 (Zoning) Section 191-48 (Landscaping)
- 2) Draft Text Amendments to Chapter 191 (New Article XI. – Water Conservation)
- 3) Town Water Conservation Tips Handout
- 4) Town Council Staff Report dated April 28, 2026.
- 5) Planning Commission Staff Report for June 2, 2026.



TOWN OF LA PLATA

305 Queen Anne Street
Post Office Box 2268
La Plata, Maryland 20646

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: June 2, 2026

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Don Dooley, Planning Director

PREPARED BY: Don Dooley, Planning Director

APPLICATON NO.: Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026 – Water Conservation

APPLICANT: Town of La Plata, Maryland

OWNER: N/A

PROJECT LOCATION: Town-wide

REQUEST: To add Article XI (Water Conservation and Emergency Restrictions) to Chapter 191 (Zoning) of the La Plata Municipal Code for the purpose of providing regulatory provisions for water conservation measures and emergency restrictions on water use as well as to amend Chapter 191-48 (Landscaping) of the La Plata Municipal Code for the purpose of facilitating water conservation measures related to the installation of new landscaping for residential and non-residential developments.

BACKGROUND

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Staff presented the Town Council with a conceptual draft of the ordinance for their initial feedback during their regularly scheduled meeting of April 28, 2026. The Council expressed interest in the water conservation ordinance and directed that it be formally reviewed by the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the Town Council.

**Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026 – Town of La Plata, Maryland
Planning Commission Meeting of June 2, 2026**

The initial draft ordinance is now being presented to the Planning Commission under Zoning Text Amendment 03-2026.

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- New irrigation systems, where proposed, must have rain shutoff sensors and no overspray onto pavement to improve irrigation efficiency.
- All required landscape plans that require Town approval shall demonstrate compliance with the proposed draft revisions in Section 191-48(B).

2. Proposed Article XI, Section 191 (Zoning) – Water Conservation and Emergency Restrictions

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**Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-2026 – Town of La Plata, Maryland
Planning Commission Meeting of June 2, 2026**

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F. Large-Volume Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Users

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- Water used for fire suppression, public health, or emergency operations is exempt from restrictions.

H. Relationship with Alternative Systems

- Systems like graywater, reclaimed water, or stormwater reuse are allowed if they meet regulations, but using them does not exempt anyone from conservation restrictions.

I. Enforcement; Penalties

- Violations are municipal infractions under §186-22.
- Each day of violation counts as a separate offense.
- The Town may give a warning first; fines escalate (e.g., \$50 first offense, \$100 second, 200 thereafter) or as set by resolution.

Planning Commission Analysis

Staff recommends using the draft water conservation ordinance as a starting point for discussing what the Commission considers reasonable and appropriate measures for promoting water conservation in the Town, especially during State-declared droughts. Because of the nature of the proposed ordinance, the Commission should consider forming a subcommittee and/or schedule a study session to review it in more detail. This approach would give Commission members time to conduct their own research and provide targeted feedback, allowing staff to refine and re-draft the ordinance in a way that best represents the Commission's collective wisdom and provides suitable measures to fit the Town's needs.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission consider forming a subcommittee to conduct its own research on appropriate water conservation measures for the Town and/or holding a study session on the topic for the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting of July 7, 2026.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Draft Text Amendment to Chapter 191 (Zoning) Section 191-48 (Landscaping)
- 2) Draft Text Amendments to Chapter 191 (New Article XI. – Water Conservation
- 3) Town Water Conservation Tips Handout
- 4) Town Council Staff Report dated April 28, 2026.

Sec. 191-48. Landscaping.

A. Purpose. The following standards are intended to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the public while conserving natural resources and creating a more attractive community. These standards shall apply to all new residential and non-residential developments that are subject to the approval of a major or minor site plan, a major or minor preliminary plat map approval or the replacement of any on-site landscaping for a specific area on a property.

B. To accomplish the purposes of this section plant materials shall conform to the following:

1. Plant Selection. All proposed tree and plant materials shall be designed-selected for energy efficiency, drought tolerance, adaptability, relationship to the environment, habitat value, color, form and pattern, ability to provide shade, soil retention, and fire resistance-resistance, and shall be a species native to the Chesapeake Bay Tributary. All native plants selected for use shall be those listed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for the piedmont or coastal plain areas of Maryland, as well as those listed by the Maryland Department of Agriculture and are drought-tolerant species most appropriate for the Chesapeake Bay Tributary.
2. Turf minimization. High water use turf species, such as conventional cool season grasses requiring routine irrigation, shall be limited to functional, regularly used recreation areas including playfields or active gathering spaces. All other lawn areas shall utilize drought tolerant or low water use turf varieties, or may be replaced with native or drought tolerant groundcovers, meadows, or other vegetative alternatives that reduce long term irrigation needs.
3. Soil preparation. Prior to planting, planting beds and turf areas shall receive soil preparation consistent with industry standards (e.g., compost amendments and soil conditioning) to improve water retention and plant health.
4. Mulch. Planting beds shall include a uniform layer of two (2) to three (3) inches of mulch to reduce evaporation.
5. Irrigation efficiency. Permanent irrigation systems, where proposed, shall include rain shutoff sensors and be designed to prevent overspray and runoff onto sidewalks, driveways, streets, or other hard surfaces.
6. Submittals. All required landscape plans shall identify species, irrigation components (if any), and soil preparation methods and shall demonstrate compliance with this subsection.

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~~2-7. Landscape Placement, Tree and Plant plant~~ materials shall not be located such that, at maturity:

- a. They interfere with safe sight distances for vehicular, bicycle or pedestrian traffic; or
- b. They conflict with overhead or underground utility lines, overhead lights, or walkway lights.

C. Parking lot landscaping.

1. Shading of parking lots shall be required as a means of remediating the harsh environment created by excessive hard surface paving. Shading, spacing and quantity requirements shall be designed to accentuate the tree plantings in relationship to the movement of the sun to cast shade over the parking during the longest period of a day.
2. The distance between shade trees is dependent upon class, size of tree and extent of tree canopy; as well as time of day or year and, angle and azimuth of the sun. Tree classes shall be in accordance with the street tree factsheets (Gerhold, 1993) and as defined below:
 - a. Class A: Trees that reach over forty-five (45) feet in height at maturity are discouraged within the interior of a parking lot but may be used on the perimeter. Minimum spacing for class A trees used for shading should be forty (40) feet apart on center.
 - b. Class B: Trees that reach thirty (30) feet to forty-five (45) feet in height at maturity. Class B trees with a small root system are better used on the interior of a parking lot to produce a shade canopy. Class B trees should have a minimum spacing of twenty (20) feet apart on center and a maximum of thirty (30) feet on center.
 - c. Class C: Trees that are thirty (30) feet or less in height at maturity and may be effectively used within parking lot interiors, but will not cast sufficient shade so should not be used for shading. Class C trees should have a minimum spacing of ten (10) feet apart on center.
3. Landscaped islands, peninsulas and medians must be matched to tree class. The size of the planting space must be matched to the potential Critical Root Zone (CRZ) of the tree species to be planted. Therefore, there are created two (2) allowable classes of parking lot planting areas as seen below.
 - a. Dimensions of landscaped islands or peninsulas shall be as follows:
 - (1) Class A: Shall be a minimum of eight (8) feet in width in order to be planted with class A trees.
 - (2) Class B: Shall be six (6) feet in width in order to be planted with class B trees.

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- (3) Class C: Shall be four (4) to six (6) feet in width in order to be planted with class C tree.
- b. Dimensions of landscaped medians shall be as follows:
 - (1) Class A: Shall be ten (10) feet in width and may be planted with any class tree.
 - (2) Class B: Shall be eight (8) feet in width and may be planted with any class B and class C trees.
 - (3) Class C: Shall be six (6) feet in width and may be planted with only class C tree.
- 4. Ground cover or plantings shall be provided for all interior and perimeter planting spaces in order to completely fill each island, peninsula or median.
- 5. Interior parking area landscaping.
 - a. The internal area of any surface parking facility must be landscaped, according to the following standards.
 - (1) Trees shall be planted within the interior of the parking areas at the rate of one (1) class A or two (2) class B trees as shown in table 15 below.

Table 15

NUMBER OF PARKING SPACES REQUIRED	MINIMUM PERCENT OF LANDSCAPING REQUIRED	NUMBER AND CLASS OF TREE REQUIRED
12 SPACES OR LESS	0%	NO INTERIOR TREES REQUIRED
13-25 SPACES	2%	ONE (1) CLASS A OR TWO (2) CLASS B PER FOURTEEN (14) SPACES
26-75 SPACES	5%	ONE (1) CLASS A OR TWO (2) CLASS B PER TWELVE (12) SPACES
76-100 SPACES	8%	ONE (1) CLASS A OR TWO (2) CLASS B PER TEN (10) SPACES
101+ SPACES	10%	ONE (1) CLASS A OR TWO (2) CLASS B PER EIGHT (8) SPACES

- 6. Perimeter parking area landscaping.
 - a. All landscaping around the perimeter of a parking area shall provide a mix of class A, B and C trees, and ground cover plantings in accordance with this section.
 - b. The perimeter of any surface parking facility must be landscaped, according to the standards shown in table 16 below.

Table 16

PROPOSED PARKING LOT SIDE ADJACENT TO, OR ABUTTING	MINIMUM REQUIRED PERIMETER LANDSCAPE WIDTH	REQUIRED TREES ²	REQUIRED SHRUBS ³	REQUIRED FENCE
PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY	TEN (10) FEET	ONE (1) CLASS A OR TWO (2) CLASS B PER FORTY (40) FEET OF LINEAR FRONTAGE	FIFTEEN (15) SHRUBS PER FORTY (40) FEET	NONE
RESIDENTIALLY ZONED PROPERTY	TEN (10) FEET	ONE (1) CLASS A OR TWO (2) CLASS B PER FORTY (40) FEET OF LINEAR FRONTAGE	FIFTEEN (15) SHRUBS PER FORTY (40) FEET	6 FOOT TALL SOLID FENCE OR WALL
PARKING LOT ¹	EIGHT (8) FEET	TWO (2) CLASS B PER FORTY (40) FEET OF LINEAR FRONTAGE	FIFTEEN (15) SHRUBS PER FORTY (40) FEET	NONE
ALL OTHER PARKING LOT PERIMETER AREAS	EIGHT (8) FEET	TWO (2) CLASS B PER FORTY (40) FEET OF LINEAR FRONTAGE	FIFTEEN (15) SHRUBS PER FORTY (40) FEET	NONE
¹ NO PERIMETER LANDSCAPING IS REQUIRED WHEN A PROPOSED PARKING LOT IS ADJACENT TO AN EXISTING REQUIRED BUFFER YARD PER §191-62 OR IF AN EIGHT (8) FOOT PERIMETER LANDSCAPED AREA IS EXISTING.				
² IF APPROPRIATE, TWO (2) ORNAMENTAL TREES MAY BE SUBSTITUTED FOR ONE (1) SHADE TREE.				
³ A LANDSCAPED BERM OR WALL THAT IS A MINIMUM OF THREE (3) FEET IN HEIGHT MAY REDUCE THE REQUIRED SHRUBS BY FIFTY PERCENT (50%).				

D. Maintenance.

1. The owner of the property shall be responsible for proper maintenance of the landscape.
2. As used in this section, "maintenance" includes watering; fertilizing; litter removal; weeding; pruning; trimming; insect, disease, rodent, and weed control; and replacement of plant materials as needed to preserve the health and appearance of the plantings.
3. Plant materials showing signs of insect or disease infestation or other damage shall be appropriately treated to restore the health of the plant materials and dead plant material removed and replaced.
4. A note shall be placed on all site plans stating the above requirement.

(Ord. No. 20-09, § 2, 9-28-2020, eff. 10-13-2020)

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PROPOSED

Chapter 191- Zoning Regulations

Article XI – Water Conservation

§ 191.98. Water Conservation and Emergency Restrictions.

A. Purpose, Applicability, and Definitions.

(1) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to conserve potable water during periods of high demand, drought, or limited supply while maintaining public health and safety.

(2) Applicability. This section applies to all properties served by the Town water system.

(3) Definitions.

(a) “Designated Large-Volume User” means any non-residential or mixed-use development that:

(i) Consumes an average of 10,000 gallons per day or more, based on the most recent three consecutive billing cycles; or

(ii) Uses 300,000 gallons or more in any single billing cycle; or

(iii) It is determined by the Chief Executive Officer to have substantial continuous or process-related water demand that materially affects system capacity, including but not limited to:

- manufacturing or processing facilities
- industrial cooling operations
- commercial laundries
- hospitals and medical centers
- educational or institutional campuses
- food and beverage production facilities
- large commercial developments with significant irrigation loads
- municipal or quasi-public facilities with comparable consumption patterns

Designation shall be based on metered water use or documented operational characteristics.

B. Declaration and Rescission of Water Conservation Alert.

- (1) Declaration. Whenever the Town's total water production reaches eighty percent (80%) of its daily or annual permitted capacity, as defined by applicable Maryland Department of the Environment water appropriation permits, or during periods of State-declared drought, the Chief Executive Officer is authorized to declare a Water Conservation Alert.
- (2) Notice. The Chief Executive Officer shall provide public notice of the declaration and effective date by reasonable means, including posting on the Town's website, social media, and other customary channels.
- (3) Rescission. The Chief Executive Officer shall rescind the Alert when production stabilizes below the threshold or when drought conditions subside and shall provide public notice of the rescission.

C. Mandatory Outdoor Watering Limitations Under a Water Conservation Alert.

- (1) Address-based schedule. Landscape irrigation and outdoor watering shall be limited to the days specified by the Town based on property address. Addresses with even numbers shall be limited to watering on even-numbered dates, and addresses with odd numbers shall be limited to watering on odd-numbered dates.
- (2) Time-of-day. Irrigation is permitted only between 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m.
- (3) Hand-watering exception. To avoid dead or dying landscaping, reasonable hand-watering of trees, shrubs, grass, and gardens using a hose-end shutoff nozzle or watering can is permitted at any time.
- (4) Severe shortage. During a severe water shortage, the Chief Executive Officer may temporarily prohibit all landscape irrigation.

D. Prohibition of Non-Essential Water Use Under a Water Conservation Alert.

- (1) Washing of sidewalks, walkways, driveways, parking lots, buildings, or other impervious surfaces is prohibited, except when necessary to address health or safety hazards (e.g., sanitation, spills).
- (2) Washing of motor vehicles is prohibited, except at commercial car wash facilities that utilize water recycling systems.

E. Recreational and Decorative Water Use Under a Water Conservation Alert.

- (1) Pools and hot tubs. Filling or refilling swimming pools or hot tubs is prohibited; topping off with the minimal volume necessary to maintain circulation and protect equipment is permitted. Public or commercial pools needed for public health may top off as necessary; Public or commercial pool operators shall provide written notice to the Town.
- (2) Ornamental fountains and decorative features. All ornamental fountains and decorative water features must utilize recirculating water systems; non-recirculating features shall be turned off.

F. Large-Volume Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Users Under a Water Conservation Alert.

- (1) Reduction requirement. The Chief Executive Officer may require Designated Large-Volume Users to reduce potable water usage by a percentage specified in the Water Conservation Alert declaration.
- (2) Compliance verification. The Town may use metered consumption and billing records to verify compliance.
- (3) Corrective plan upon noncompliance. If a Designated Large-Volume User fails to meet the required reduction, the user shall submit and implement a water-use reduction plan that describes industry-standard conservation measures (e.g., leak detection and repair, process optimization, reuse systems) within the timelines established by the Town.

G. Emergency and Health/Safety Exemptions.

- (1) Water use necessary for fire suppression, public health protection, or other emergency operations by public agencies is exempt.

H. Relationship with Alternative Systems.

- (1) Installation and use of graywater, reclaimed water, or stormwater capture systems for non-potable uses is permitted subject to all applicable state and local plumbing and health standards. Use of such systems does not exempt any user from the restrictions in this Ordinance.

I. Enforcement; Penalties.

- (1) Violations of this section are municipal infractions enforceable pursuant to § 186-22 of the Town Code.

- (2) Each day of a continuing violation constitutes a separate offense.
- (3) The Town may issue warnings for a first observed violation. Thereafter, fines may be imposed on a tiered basis (e.g., \$50 for a first offense, \$100 for a second offense, and \$200 for subsequent offenses), or as otherwise established by resolution.

J. Severability.

- (1) If any provision of this section is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions, which are severable.
- (2) Where the provisions of this section are less restrictive than applicable state statutes or regulations governing water conservation, drought response, plumbing standards, or water-use restrictions, the more restrictive state requirements shall apply.

K. Appeals.

- (1) Any person or entity subject to a notice of violation, required reduction in use, or other enforcement action under this section may submit a written appeal to the Chief Executive Officer within ten (10) calendar days of the date of the notice. The appeal shall state the specific grounds for reconsideration and include any supporting documentation. The Chief Executive Officer, or designee, shall issue a written decision within fifteen (15) calendar days of receiving the appeal. The decision of the Chief Executive Officer shall constitute the Town's final administrative determination.

-END-



Water Conservation Tips

(Source: Maryland Department of the Environment, www.mde.maryland.gov)

Tips for Inside the Home

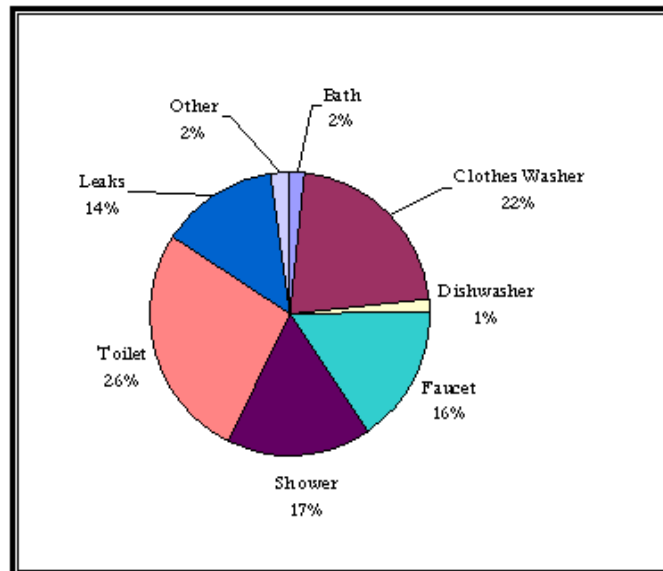
Marylanders have access to an abundance of water much of the time, so the importance of clean water is often overlooked. For most of us, water use is a habit. We are accustomed to having water available at the twist of a faucet. We usually do not think about how much water we use.

Average Daily Water Use

Be aware of how much water you use! Awareness is the first step in conservation. The average Maryland citizen uses almost 100 gallons of water per person per day on the following activities:

- Toilet
- Bathing and hygiene
- Laundry
- Kitchen
- Housekeeping
- Outdoor Activities

Indoor water use by fixture is shown in the following graph: Indoor Per Capita Use by Fixture



Source: AWWA, 1999

Source: Maryland Department of the Environment, www.mde.maryland.gov

You can determine your average daily water use by conducting a Household Water Audit.

Water Savings

The amount of savings depends on current water consumption habits, water, sewer and energy costs, current flow rates of fixtures and flush volumes of toilets, system pressure, and the amount of water leakage through fittings and toilets. Water can be conserved by making improvements in the home or by modifying behavior.

Retrofit or Replace Water Fixtures

Water-saving devices are economical and permanent. Low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators save valuable water and energy used to heat water without requiring changes in personal water use habits. The following chart highlights how much water can be conserved by installing water-saving equipment in place of conventional plumbing fixtures, fittings, and appliances.

Conventional Fixture/Appliance	Water Use (gallons)	Water Saving Fixture/Appliance	Water Use (gallons)	Water Savings (gallons)
Vintage Toilet*	4 - 6 per flush	Low Consumption Toilet***	1.6 per flush	2.4 - 4.4 per flush
Conventional Toilet**	3.5 per flush	Low Consumption Toilet***	1.6 per flush	1.9 gal/flush
Conventional Showerhead*	3-10 per min	Low-Flow Showerhead	2-2.5 per min	0.5 - 8 per min
Faucet Aerator*	3-6 per min	Flow Regulating Aerator	0.5-2.5 per min.	0.5- 5.5 per min
Top-Loading Washer	40-55 per load	Front-Loading Washer	22-25 per load	15 - 33 per load

* Manufactured before 1978

** Manufactured from 1978 to 1993

*** Manufactured since January 1, 1994

Repair All Leaks

A dripping faucet is more than annoying...it is expensive. Even small leaks can waste significant amounts of water. Hot water leaks are a waste of water and of the energy used to heat the water.

Leaks inside the toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water a day. Toilet leaks can be detected by adding a few drops of food coloring to water in the toilet tank. If the colored water appears in the bowl, the toilet is leaking.

If you have a leaking faucet or toilet, stop pouring money down the drain and repair it.

Save Water In The Bathroom

- When constructing a new home or remodeling your bathroom, install low consumption (1.6 gal/flush) toilets.
- Place a weighted plastic one-half gallon jug or a toilet dam in the tanks of conventional toilets to displace and save water with each flush.
- Install low-flow aerators and showerheads. They are inexpensive, easy to install, and save water and energy.
- Do not let the faucet flow while brushing your teeth or shaving. Use a glass of water for rinsing teeth.
- Take showers instead of tub baths. Consider bathing small children together.
- If your shower has a single-handle control or shut off valve, turn off the flow while soaping or shampooing.
- Leaking diverter valves (valves that divert water from the tub spout to the showerhead) should be replaced.

Save Water In The Kitchen And Laundry Room

- Refrigerate a pitcher of drinking water instead of letting a faucet flow until the water is cold enough to drink.
- Use a dishpan or plug the sink for washing and rinsing dishes. Install a low-flow aerator on all faucets.
- Do not pre-rinse dishes prior to loading in a dishwasher. Prerinsing is an unnecessary and wasteful use of water.
- Operate the washing machine and dishwasher only when they are fully loaded.
- Use the proper water level or load size selection on the washing machine.
- When purchasing a washing machine or dishwasher, consider water consumption as well as energy efficiency. Most manufacturers now provide this information to consumers.

Save Water Outside The Home

Watering of lawns and gardens can double normal household water use during the hot, dry summer months. At standard household water pressures, a garden hose will discharge up to 10 gallons of water per minute. To apply an inch of water to 1,000 square feet of lawn or garden requires close to 1,000 gallons of water.

Watering should be limited to gardens, newly planted lawns, and landscaped areas. Established lawns and landscape plantings will usually survive without watering. Inadequate watering encourages shallow root growth and increases the risk of mortality. When water is scarce, your community or individual water supply should be reserved for your most essential needs.

- Equip your hose with an automatic shut-off nozzle.
- Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveways, steps, and sidewalks.
- Water your garden during the coolest part of the day. Do not water on windy days.
- Use mulch around shrubs and garden plants to reduce evaporation from the soil surface and cut down on weed growth.

For more information, contact water.supply@maryland.gov.



Item Number: 2026-

Date of Meeting: April 28, 2026

Agenda Item Summary

MEETING GROUP: Town Council
STAFF RESOURCE: Chuck Stevens
DEPARTMENT: Administration
TYPE: Town Council Direction to Staff
SUBJECT: Town Code & Zoning Text Amendments

BACKGROUND:

The Town of La Plata is a designated State of Maryland Priority Funding Area and serves as the primary growth hub for Charles County. The Town owns and operates its water and sewer utility systems, which currently serve approximately 4,038 residential, 360 commercial, and 35 municipal water accounts across 74 miles of distribution pipe.

The Town's water supply is drawn entirely from the Lower Patapsco Aquifer under two Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Groundwater Appropriation Permits, which authorize an average daily withdrawal of 1.23 million gallons per day (MGD). As of January–June 2025, average daily use has reached approximately 1.11 MGD — approximately 90% of the permitted average allocation — and is projected to exceed the allocation limit during summer months beginning in 2026. MDE has indicated it is reluctant to increase the Town's groundwater allocation without a supplemental water source agreement in place. The Environmental Article of the Maryland Code prohibits the issuance of building permits and subdivision approvals without an adequate public water supply.

The Town is pursuing a multi-pronged strategy to address its long-term water supply challenge. Initial conversations with Charles County regarding a supplemental water supply arrangement are underway, and the FY26 budget includes \$2.0 million for a physical connection to the County water system. Separately, proposed amendments to the Town's Adequate Public Facilities standards are scheduled for formal Town Council consideration on April 28, 2026, which will address water, sewer, and school capacity as conditions of development approval. The item before the Council tonight addresses the third prong of that strategy: adoption of formal water conservation policies.

Staff developed proposed code language consisting of two components. The first is proposed Article XI in Chapter 191 (Water Conservation and Emergency Restrictions) that would establish a Water Conservation Alert system, authorize mandatory outdoor watering restrictions, prohibit non-essential water uses during declared drought alert periods, and



impose consumption reduction requirements on designated large-volume commercial and industrial users. The second component is an amendment that would establish water-efficient landscaping standards — commonly referred to as xeriscaping standards — applicable to new residential, commercial, and industrial development, subject to site plan or landscape plan approval.

Proposed Section 191.98 would authorize the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to declare a Water Conservation Alert when the Town's total water production reaches 80% of its daily or annual permitted capacity, or during a State-declared drought. Upon declaration, the ordinance would impose an address-based outdoor watering schedule (even/odd by date), restrict irrigation to nighttime and early morning hours, prohibit washing of hard surfaces and personal vehicles, restrict filling or refilling of pools and hot tubs, and require non-recirculating decorative features to be turned off. Designated Large-Volume Users — those averaging 10,000 gallons per day or more — would be required to reduce consumption by a percentage specified in the Alert declaration, with compliance verified through metered billing records. Violations would be enforced as municipal infractions with a tiered fine structure.

The proposed Chapter 191-48 amendment would require landscape plans for new development to prioritize native and drought-tolerant plant species, limit high-water-use turf to functional recreation areas, require soil preparation to improve water retention, mandate mulched planting beds, and require that any permanent irrigation systems include rain shutoff sensors and be designed to prevent overspray onto impervious surfaces.

This work session is intended to present the proposed code language for Council discussion and to solicit direction to advance the amendments through the formal adoption process, including referral to the Planning Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Adoption of the proposed ordinances is not anticipated to generate direct costs beyond staff time associated with public notice and the Planning Commission review process. The Chapter 186 amendment relies on existing metering and billing infrastructure for compliance verification, and enforcement follows the Town's existing municipal infraction process, which does not require additional administrative capacity.

The proposed fine structure — warnings for a first observed violation, followed by tiered fines of \$50, \$100, and \$200 for subsequent violations — is consistent with common



municipal practice and is not expected to generate material revenue. Any future modifications to the fine schedule may be established by resolution of the Council without requiring a code amendment.

Indirectly, adoption of effective conservation measures supports the long-term fiscal sustainability of the water utility by reducing peak demand pressure on a non-expandable groundwater allocation, deferring the costs and timing of supplemental supply investments, and reducing the risk of regulatory non-compliance.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This initiative aligns with the Town's 2022 Strategic Plan as follows:

- **Goal #1 – Good Governance:** Adopting clear, codified conservation standards reflects responsible stewardship of the Town's water resources and establishes transparent, policy-based tools for managing supply constraints.
- **Goal #5 – Public Service Readiness:** The Strategic Plan directs the Town to "ensure adequate natural resource availability to meet usage demands" and to "track water access to ensure availability exceeds demand." Formal conservation authority directly advances both objectives.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

This initiative has direct environmental sustainability implications. The conservation restrictions reduce demand on a limited and non-expandable groundwater resource during periods of peak stress, preserving the long-term health of the shared Lower Patapsco Aquifer. The landscaping standards reduce baseline irrigation demand from new development over time by promoting drought-tolerant plant species, efficient irrigation design, and improved soil water retention.

The ordinance explicitly permits and encourages the use of graywater, reclaimed water, and stormwater capture systems for non-potable uses where consistent with applicable state and local health and plumbing standards, further supporting the Town's environmental sustainability posture. These elements are consistent with actions recognized under Sustainable Maryland and the Town's broader environmental stewardship commitments.

ADA CONSIDERATIONS:

No direct ADA implications are associated with the proposed code amendments. As the ordinances are finalized through the Planning Commission process, staff will ensure that



Item Number: 2026-

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any public-facing notice requirements, outreach materials, and enforcement communications are accessible in accordance with applicable ADA guidance.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff requests that the Town Council receive this presentation, provide feedback on the proposed code language, and direct staff to refer the proposed amendments to the Planning Commission for formal consideration and recommendation to the Council.

No formal vote is requested at this time. Staff will return to the Council with a Planning Commission recommendation and a proposed adoption schedule.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Proposed Code Language — Chapter 191.98: Water Conservation and Emergency Restrictions; Chapter 191, § 191-48: Water-Efficient Landscaping Standards
- Anticipated Council Questions & Suggested Responses