



**Town Council
Regular Meeting**
September 23, 2025, 6:00 PM
Council Chambers, La Plata Town Hall
305 Queen Anne St
La Plata MD

Agenda

1. Call to Order

1.1. Call to Order

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 Town Council may allow participants to voice questions or provide comments on the topics under discussion. Written comments may be submitted via email to Legislative@townoflaplata.org. Individuals wishing to address the Town Council may sign up in advance on the Town's website (Public Communications) or on the meeting sign-up sheet.

Join on your computer, mobile app, or room device.

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 240 806 147 692

Passcode: 2T5Bm6FQ

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 will be held in closed session.

1.2. Roll Call

1.3. Pledge of Allegiance

1.4. Approval of the Meeting Agenda

2. Disclosure of Closed Session

2.1. Disclosure of Closed Session on September 9, 2025

3. Consent Agenda

3.1. Approval of minutes from Regular Meeting on August 12, 2025

3.2. Approval of minutes from Regular Meeting on August 26, 2025

4. Petitions, Communications, Appearances and Public Comment
 - 4.1. Public Comment
 - 4.2. Proclamation: National Code Compliance Month
 - 4.3. Proclamation: Community Planning Month
5. New Business
 - 5.1. Report from the Town Manager
 - 5.2. Reports from the Mayor and Town Council
6. Motion for a Closed Session
 - 6.1. **Statutory Authority to Close Session:** § 3-305(b)(7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice.
Topic: Legal implications and risks associated with ongoing personnel and administrative matters
Reason for Closure: Discussion involves privileged attorney-client communications regarding legal risks and strategy not appropriate for public disclosure
 - 6.2. **Statutory Authority to Close Session:** § 3-305(b)(8) to consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation
Topic: Pending Maryland Department of the Environment litigation
Reason for Closure: Discussion involves communications regarding pending litigation not appropriate for public disclosure
7. Adjourn
 - 7.1. Adjournment

**PRESIDING OFFICER'S WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR CLOSING A MEETING ("CLOSING STATEMENT") UNDER THE
OPEN MEETINGS ACT (General Provisions Article § 3-305)**

This Certification Must Be Completed Before a Closed Session May Be Held

Date: **09/09/2025** Time: **8:34 PM** Location: **La Plata Town Hall** at this meeting, a motion was made by **Councilman Johnson** and seconded by **Councilman Guttenberg** to conduct a closed session of the Council of the Town of La Plata.

Recorded vote to close the meeting:

<u>Members</u>	<u>IN FAVOR</u>	<u>OPPOSED</u>	<u>ABSTAINING</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Mayor Jeannine E. James	☒	☐	☐	☐
Councilman Paul Guttenberg	☒	☐	☐	☐
Councilman Patrick McCormick	☒	☐	☐	☐
Councilman Gregory Sampson Jr.	☒	☐	☐	☐
Councilman Tyjon Johnson	☒	☐	☐	☐

(Note: If any member of the public objects to conducting the closed session, a copy of this certification must be sent to the Maryland Open Meetings Law Compliance Board.)

STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO CLOSE SESSION, State Government Article §3-305(b) (check all that apply):

☐ **(1) To discuss:**

- ☐ **(i)** the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom it has jurisdiction; or
- ☐ **(ii)** any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals;

☐ **(2)** protect the privacy or reputation of an individual with respect to a matter that is not related to public business;

☐ **(3)** consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related to the acquisition;

☐ **(4)** consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State;

☐ **(5)** consider the investment of public funds;

☐ **(6)** consider the marketing of public securities;

☒ **(7)** consult with counsel to obtain legal advice;

☐ **(8)** consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation;

☐ **(9)** conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations;

☐ **(10)** discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to the public or to public security, including:

- ☐ **(i)** the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and

- ☐ **(ii)** the development and implementation of emergency plans;

☐ **(11)** prepare, administer, or grade a scholastic, licensing, or qualifying examination;

☐ **(12)** conduct or discuss an investigative proceeding on actual or possible criminal conduct;

☐ **(13)** comply with a specific constitutional, statutory, or judicially imposed requirement that prevents public disclosures about a particular proceeding or matter;

☐ **(14)** discuss, before a contract is awarded or bids are opened, a matter directly related to a negotiating strategy or the contents of a bid or proposal, if public discussion or disclosure would adversely impact the ability of the public body to participate in the competitive bidding or proposal process; or

☐ **(15)** discuss cybersecurity, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to:

- ☐ **(i)** security assessments or deployments relating to information resources technology;

- ☐ **(ii)** network security information, including information that is:

- ☐ **1.** related to passwords, personal identification numbers, access codes, encryption, or other components of the security system of a governmental entity;

- ☐ **2.** collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental entity to prevent, detect, or investigate criminal activity; or

- ☐ **3.** related to an assessment, made by or for a governmental entity or maintained by a governmental entity, of the vulnerability of a network to criminal activity; or

- ☐ **(iii)** deployments or implementation of security personnel, critical infrastructure, or security devices.

**PRESIDING OFFICER'S WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR CLOSING A MEETING ("CLOSING STATEMENT") UNDER THE
OPEN MEETINGS ACT (General Provisions Article § 3-305)**
This Certification Must Be Completed Before a Closed Session May Be Held

For each citation checked the reasons for closing and topics to be discussed:

- (7) **Topic:** Water Contract Negotiation
Reason for Closure:
Discussion involves privileged attorney-client communications regarding negotiation strategy not appropriate for public disclosure

Persons attending closed session:

Jeannine E. James, Mayor	Tyjon C. Johnson, Councilman	
Paul C. Guttenberg, Councilman	Jack "Jay" Gullo, Town Special Counsel	
Patrick McCormick, Councilman	Chuck Stevens, Town Manager	
Gregory Sampson, Jr., Councilman	Michelle Miner, Assistant Town Manager	

Action(s) Taken:

- (7) Legal Consultation: The Town's Special Counsel provided legal updates and consultation on matters within attorney-client privilege.
- (7) Water and Sewer Infrastructure: Discussion of ongoing negotiations with governmental entities regarding water and sewer matters. Council directed the Town Manager to prioritize and initiate the drafting of an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance for the Town.

Time closed session adjourned **09:37 PM**

This statement is made by Mayor Jeannine E. James, Presiding Officer: _____



Agenda Item Summary

MEETING GROUP: Town Council
STAFF RESOURCE: Kelly Phipps
DEPARTMENT: Legislative
TYPE: Town Council Proclamation
SUBJECT: National Code Compliance Month

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, President George W. Bush established October as National Code Compliance Month in acknowledgement of the importance and impact that code enforcement has on its communities. Code Enforcement Officers provide for safety and welfare of the citizens throughout the United States through the enforcement of local codes or ordinances facing various issues of building, zoning, housing, animal control, environmental, health and life safety. Like Law Enforcement Officers, Code Enforcement Officers are dedicated and highly qualified professionals who share the goals of preventing neighborhood deterioration, enhancing, and ensuring safety, and preserving property values through knowledge and application of house, zone, and nuisance codes and ordinances. Like all Town employees, Code Enforcement Officers are called upon to provide quality customer service and excellence to the residents and businesses of the communities in which they serve.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A. This proclamation incurs no financial obligations.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

Aligns with Goal #2, Operational Excellence, specifically: "Retain high quality and committed employees by promoting a level of work/life effectiveness appropriate to keep excellent employees across the organization."

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

Code Enforcement Officers are frequently called upon to identify violations of Town Code that impact the town's natural and man-made resources with the potential for deleterious effects on public safety and hygiene and the Chesapeake Watershed.



La Plata
MARYLAND

FOR LEGISLATIVE USE ONLY

Item Number: 2025-1264

Date of Meeting: September 23, 2025

ADA CONSIDERATIONS:

Code compliance includes accessibility considerations for community members with disabilities, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Issue a proclamation recognizing October as National Code Compliance Month in the Town of La Plata.

ATTACHMENTS:

Proclamation - National Code Compliance Month



Town of La Plata **PROCLAMATION**

NATIONAL CODE COMPLIANCE MONTH

WHEREAS, Code Enforcement Officers provide for safety and welfare of the citizens throughout the United States through the enforcement of local codes or ordinances facing various issues of building, zoning, housing, animal control, environmental, health and life safety; and

WHEREAS, Code Enforcement Officers often have a challenging and demanding role and often do not receive recognition for the job that they do in improving living and working conditions for residents and businesses of local communities; and

WHEREAS, the role of many Code Enforcement Officers has expanded in recent years with the increased number of foreclosed and abandoned homes in communities impacted economically; and

WHEREAS, Code Enforcement Officers are dedicated and highly qualified professionals who share the goals of preventing neighborhood deterioration, enhancing, and ensuring safety, and preserving property values through knowledge and application of house, zone, and nuisance codes and ordinances; and

WHEREAS, Code Enforcement Officers often have a highly visible role in the communities they serve and regularly interact with a variety of state officials, county officials, first responders, legislative boards, commissions, agencies, and bodies; and

WHEREAS, Code Enforcement Officers are called upon to provide quality customer service and excellence to the residents and businesses of the communities in which they serve.

NOW, THEREFORE, WE, THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA, do hereby recognize October as NATIONAL CODE COMPLIANCE MONTH in the Town of La Plata. The Council encourages all citizens to recognize and express their appreciation for the dedication and service by the individuals who serve as our Code Enforcement Officers.

SEAL:

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA

Jeannine E. James, Mayor

Paul C. Guttenberg, Councilman

Patrick McCormick, Councilman

Gregory Sampson Jr., Councilman

Tyjon C. Johnson, Councilman

ATTEST:

Kelly G. Phipps
Director of Legislative Services

Date: _____



Agenda Item Summary

MEETING GROUP: Town Council
STAFF RESOURCE: Kelly Phipps
DEPARTMENT: Legislative
TYPE: Town Council Proclamation
SUBJECT: Community Planning Month

BACKGROUND:

The month of October is designated as Community Planning Month throughout the United States of America and its territories. Community Planning Month serves to recognize the vital role that planners play in shaping the environments where people live, work, and play. It emphasizes the need for thoughtful planning to address challenges such as housing shortages, transportation issues, and environmental sustainability. Planners work to improve the well-being of all people living in our communities by leveraging professional expertise, data-driven insights, and a long-term, comprehensive vision for the future. This approach leads to safer, more resilient, more equitable, and more prosperous communities.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A. This proclamation incurs no financial obligations.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

Aligns with Goal #2, Operational Excellence, specifically: “Retain high quality and committed employees by promoting a level of work/life effectiveness appropriate to keep excellent employees across the organization.” Recognizes the integral role of community planners to Goal #3, Economic Prosperity.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

Climate change, water resources, and infrastructure needs are just a few of the issues facing communities today as we plan for the 21st century and beyond. Planners balance short-term and long-term interests to enhance the viability of their communities.

Through citizen engagement, plan making, capital improvements, development review, and other planning actions, planners promote fiscally sound investments and decisions that protect and restore the natural environment, conserve resources, and build more sustainable communities. (American Planning Association, 2025)



ADA CONSIDERATIONS:

City planners and urban developers play a pivotal role in this transformative process. They are tasked with the critical responsibility of implementing ADA guidelines to create spaces that are not only accessible but also welcoming to all residents. This involves a comprehensive examination of urban infrastructure, transportation systems, public accommodations, and facilities to align with ADA standards. Understanding the ADA's scope, guidelines, and enforcement mechanisms is essential for those involved in city planning. This knowledge equips them with the requisite insights to design and modify environments, ensuring they are usable by people with diverse abilities. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance urban living experiences while promoting inclusivity, independence, and participation for individuals with disabilities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Issue a proclamation recognizing October as Community Planning Month in the Town of La Plata.

ATTACHMENTS:

Proclamation – Community Planning Month



Town of La Plata **PROCLAMATION** **COMMUNITY PLANNING MONTH**

WHEREAS, change is constant and affects all cities, towns, suburbs, counties, boroughs, townships, rural areas, and other places; and

WHEREAS, community planning and plans can help manage this change in a way that provides better choices for how people work and live; and

WHEREAS, community planning provides an opportunity for all residents to be meaningfully involved in making choices that determine the future of their community; and

WHEREAS, community planning and plans are essential to recovery and planners can lead communities to equitable, resilient, and long-lasting recovery; and

WHEREAS, the full benefits of planning require public officials and citizens who understand, support, and demand excellence in planning and plan implementation; and

WHEREAS, the month of October is designated as National Community Planning Month throughout the United States of America and its territories, and

WHEREAS, the celebration of National Community Planning Month gives us the opportunity to publicly recognize the participation and dedication of the members of planning commissions and other citizen planners who have contributed their time and expertise to the improvement of the Town of La Plata; and

WHEREAS, we recognize the many valuable contributions made by professional community planners of the Town of La Plata and extend our heartfelt thanks for the continued commitment to public service by these professionals; and

NOW, THEREFORE, WE, THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA, do hereby proclaim October to be **COMMUNITY PLANNING MONTH** in the Town of La Plata. The Council encourages all citizens to recognize and appreciate the dedication and contributions of community planners to enhancing the lives of our citizens and businesses.

SEAL:

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA

Jeannine E. James, Mayor

Paul C. Guttenberg, Councilman

Patrick McCormick, Councilman

Gregory Sampson Jr., Councilman

Tyjon C. Johnson, Councilman

Kelly G. Phipps
Director of Legislative Services

Date: _____



Town of La Plata, MD Council Retreat. Delivered Sept 18, 2025

Who, When, and Where

- Participants: La Plata Town Council, Town Manager, and Assistant Town Manager, including:
 - Jeannine James, Mayor
 - Paul Guttenberg, Councilman, Ward I
 - Patrick McCormick, Councilman, Ward II
 - Gregory Sampson, Councilman, Ward III
 - Tyjon 'TJ' Johnson, Councilman, Ward IV
 - Chuck Stevens, Town Manager
 - Michelle Miner, Assistant Town Manager
- Date | Time: September 11, 2025 | 8:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Location: Wills Memorial Park, 505 St. Marys Ave., La Plata, MD 20646

Purpose of the session

To facilitate the Town Council's review of the current strategic framework and create new strategic priorities for the Town of La Plata.

Next steps captured in the session

- **Jeannine & Paul** will revise the goals and goal statements to propose to the Town Council for approval.
- **Chuck & Michelle** will share the session summary from Zelos with the Town Council.
- **The Town Council** agreed that the priorities set in this session have been turned over to staff to execute, though ongoing discussion is encouraged. Additionally, staff will still address regular maintenance requests, as needed, in addition to the prioritized Initiatives.



La Plata Strategic Plan Draft as of September 11, 2025

Mission

To provide cost-effective services in a safe and welcoming community.

Vision

*A vibrant, connected community where residents
can work and play where they live.*

Next, one page for—

Five Goals with Goal Statements and Possible Updates

Plus, Associated Initiatives from Council with Identified Priorities

Council identified the following Initiative as a priority for this year, not only because it's a mandate, but also to increase community engagement.

- Maryland Accessibility Mandate – accessible website by 2026
 - Create Strategic Plan Dashboard and update Comprehensive Plan Dashboard to be accessible



Good Governance

We will serve as responsible stewards of community trust in making decisions to maximize public service value to our residents.

Considerations for updates

None.

All current initiatives

- 1) Update Town Code
- 2) Rules of Procedure review
- 3) Update dashboard for Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan
- 4) Strategic review of Town property holdings
- 5) Election code updates
- 6) Charter Amendment: Require Town Manager
- 7) Charter Amendment: Department Heads serve Council
- 8) Reserve Fund Policy
- 9) Investigate ways to give a financial break to residents at Budget Retreat
 - a. Ideas: Analyze home values; then partner with Maryland Municipal League (MML) and/or write a letter to the Maryland House of Delegates.

Decision: Initiatives to advance by December 31, 2025

- 6 & 7) Full Review of Charter
- 8) Reserve Fund Policy



Operational Excellence

Retain professional staff with the appropriate education, facilities, equipment, tools, and technology to efficiently provide quality work with a sense of pride.

Considerations for updates

Consider updating the goal title to reference staff.

All current initiatives

- 1) Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System (LEOPS) study evaluation
- 2) Citizen request tracking system

Decision: Initiatives to advance by December 31, 2025

None.



Economic Prosperity

Develop an economic base in La Plata that offers desirable careers and supports high standards of living for residents now and into the future.

Considerations for updates

- Consider adding language to be more inclusive of different ranges of economic prosperity across income levels.

All current initiatives

- 1) Tourism Zone Ordinance
- 2) Host signature tourism festival
- 3) Main Street Maryland application
- 4) Downtown partnership formalization
- 5) Downtown revitalization projects
- 6) Vacancy Tax Ordinance

Decision: Initiatives to advance by December 31, 2025

- 1) Tourism Zone Ordinance
- 4) Downtown partnership formalization



Community Identity

Engage citizens and visitors through enhancement and communication of amenities, programs, and events hosted in La Plata.

Considerations for updates

- Consider further defining what La Plata's community identity is.

All current initiatives

- 1) Community survey and goal setting
- 2) Create Town identity
- 3) Senior services needs assessment
- 4) Community Engagement Strategy
- 5) Dorchester Community Planning Center

Decision: Initiatives to advance by December 31, 2025

None.



Public Service Readiness

Plan and develop the systems and infrastructure needed to meet growing demand, while supporting the health, safety, and wellness of residents and natural resources.

Considerations for updates

- Consider adding language referencing aging infrastructure needs as well as growth.

All current initiatives

- 1) Fund elimination of stormwater maintenance backlog
- 2) Memorandum of understanding (MOU) for water with Charles County
- 3) Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO)
- 4) Safe Streets Grant
- 5) Fiscal impact of zoning/Land use study
- 6) Sidewalks on Washington Avenue

Decision: Initiatives to advance by December 31, 2025

- 3) Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO)
- 4) Safe Streets Grant



Summary of Initiatives to advance before December 31, 2025 in order of discussion

1. Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) [Public Service Readiness]
 - a. Then, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for water with Charles County
2. Tourism Zone Ordinance [Economic Prosperity]
3. Maryland Accessibility Mandate – accessible website by 2026
 - a. Then, create Strategic Plan Dashboard and update Comprehensive Plan Dashboard to be accessible
4. Safe Streets Grant [Public Service Readiness]
5. Reserve Fund Policy [Good Governance]
6. Downtown partnership formalization [Economic Prosperity]
7. Charter review [Good Governance]