



TOWN OF LA PLATA
Town Council Minutes
September 23, 2025, 6:00 PM
Regular Meeting
Council Chambers, La Plata Town Hall
305 Queen Anne St
La Plata MD

PRESENT: Mayor Jeannine James
Councilman Paul Guttenberg
Councilman Patrick McCormick
Councilman Gregory Sampson, Jr.
Councilman Tyjon Johnson

ABSENT:

TOWN STAFF: Chuck Stevens, Town Manager
Michelle Miner, Assistant Town Manager
Don Dooley, Director of Planning
Monica Kennedy, Director of Human Resources (virtual)
Kelly Phipps, Director of Legislative Services

GUESTS:

1. Call to Order

Councilman Johnson served as presiding officer in his capacity as Mayor Pro Tem.

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.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1.2. Roll Call

Director Phipps conducted Roll Call.

Mayor James attended virtually.

1.3. Pledge of Allegiance

The Mayor Pro Tem led all assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.4. Approval of the Meeting Agenda

Councilman Guttenberg moved to approve the agenda as presented.

Moved By: Paul Guttenberg, seconded by Gregory Sampson, Jr.

Ayes: Mayor James, Councilman Guttenberg, Councilman McCormick, Councilman Sampson, Jr., Councilman Johnson

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

2. Disclosure of Closed Session

2.1. Disclosure of Closed Session on September 9, 2025

In accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act, Annotated Code of Maryland, General Provisions Article § 3-211, the Mayor Pro Tem disclosed that the Town Council Closed Session held a Closed Session on September 9, 2025. Specific information relevant to the Closed Session was included on the Closing Statement, attached to the agenda.

3. Consent Agenda

Councilman McCormick moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Moved By: Patrick McCormick, seconded by Paul Guttenberg.

Ayes: Mayor James, Councilman Guttenberg, Councilman McCormick, Councilman Sampson, Jr., Councilman Johnson

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

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

Ms. Prescott signed up in advance to address the Town Council but was not present in the Council Chambers. No other public speakers were present at this meeting.

4.2. Proclamation: National Code Compliance Month

Councilman Sampson read the proclamation for National Code Compliance Month.

4.3. Proclamation: Community Planning Month

Councilman Guttenberg read the proclamation for Community Planning Month.

5. New Business

5.1. Report from the Town Manager

The Town Manager reported on the final report presented by Zelos, the moderators of the Town Council retreat held on September 11, 2025.

5.2. Reports from the Mayor and Town Council

The Town Council remarked on events and occurrences at the national and local levels.

6. Motion for a Closed Session

The Mayor Pro Tem read the statutory authorities for two topics scheduled for discussion in a closed session.

Councilman Guttenberg moved to motion to enter closed session.

Moved By: Paul Guttenberg, seconded by Gregory Sampson, Jr.

Ayes: Mayor James, Councilman Guttenberg, Councilman Sampson, Jr., Councilman Johnson

Nays: Councilman McCormick

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

The Town Council came to a consensus to allow Councilman McCormick to express the opinion of the minority vote. Mayor James was in opposition.

Councilman McCormick was in opposition to the first closed session topic and expressed the opinion that it should be discussed in open session. Councilman Guttenberg noted that the unique nature of the topic and those involved required discussion in 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

The Mayor Pro Tem adjourned the meeting at 6:37 PM.

Councilman McCormick moved to adjourn [to closed session].

Moved By: Patrick McCormick, seconded by Tyjon Johnson.

Ayes: None

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:
Passed

Submitted by:

Kelly G. Phipps
Director of Legislative Services



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]