



TOWN OF LA PLATA
Town Council Minutes
October 21, 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)
Karina Larsen, Town Treasurer
Kelly Phipps, Director of Legislative Services

GUESTS:

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

Mayor James called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1.2. Roll Call

Director Phipps conducted Roll Call.

1.3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor James led all assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.4. Approval of the Meeting Agenda

Councilman McCormick moved to approve the agenda as presented.

Moved By: Patrick McCormick, seconded by Tyjon Johnson.

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

2. Disclosure of Closed Session

2.1. Disclosure of Closed Session on September 23, 2025

In accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act § 3-306(c)(2), Mayor James disclosed the conduct of a closed session on September 23, 2025.

3. Petitions, Communications, Appearances and Public Comment

3.1. Public Comment

Maggie Larrick spoke on the topic of the Washington-Rochambeau Victory Route.

4. Matters of Council Discussion

4.1. Firehouse Museum Presentation by Historic Preservation Commission

Rich Gilpin, chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, addressed the Town Council seeking approval for the Firehouse building to become a museum in the future. The Town Council requested that staff provide more information on feasible uses for the Firehouse building.

4.2. Safe Streets for All Project Update

Jamie Kendrick (Woodvalley Community Solutions) provided an overview of the Town's efforts to date to leverage Safe Streets and Roads for All grant funding.

4.3. Southwest Access Management Plan Project Update

Jamie Kendrick provided an overview of the history of the Southwest Access Management Plan to date and answered questions from the Town Council. Mr. Kendrick identified the "Florida T" as a potential solution to allow a safer and easier entrance to and exit from the Steeplechase neighborhood. The projected time to complete such a project is four (4) years.

4.4. Utility Bill Assistance for La Plata Residents and Businesses

The Town Manager delivered the staff report proposing utility bill relief for residents and businesses affected by the federal furlough. The Town Council came to a consensus to proceed with legislation.

4.5. Purchase of Security Cameras

The Town Manager delivered the staff report proposing the purchase of security cameras for Town Hall and the La Plata Police Department. The Town Council came to a consensus to proceed with legislation.

4.6. Town Hall Host Server Replacement

The Town Manager delivered the staff report proposing the purchase of a host server to replace the existing end-of-life server. The Town Council came to a consensus to proceed with legislation.

4.7. Discussion of Charter Amendments

1. Concerning Elected Officials' Salaries
2. Concerning Appointment of Town Manager
3. Concerning Appointment of Town Attorney
4. Resign to Run

Councilman Johnson presented four potential amendments to Articles 3, 4, and 9 of the Town Charter, and a potential addition to the Town Charter. The Town Council reached a consensus to include these items on a future agenda and directed staff to explore appropriate instruments for the proposed topics.

4.8. Discussion of Petition to Maryland Department of the Environment for Aquifer Reallocation

Councilman McCormick proposed that the Town explore other avenues to acquire additional water allocations. The Town Council did not reach a consensus on advancing this proposal to a future agenda.

Ayes: Councilman McCormick

Nays: Mayor James, Councilman Guttenberg, Councilman Sampson, Councilman Johnson

Abstained: None

4.9. Discussion of Tax Relief for La Plata Residents

Councilman McCormick proposed a change to the Town's homestead tax structure. The Town Council did not reach a consensus on advancing this proposal to a future agenda.

Ayes: Councilman McCormick

Nays: Mayor James, Councilman Guttenberg, Councilman Sampson, Councilman Johnson

Abstained: None

5. Legislation

5.1. Resolution 25-25 Utility Bill Assistance for La Plata Residents and Businesses (For Introduction and Consideration of Adoption)

A RESOLUTION concerning

Utility Bill Assistance for Town Residents and Businesses

FOR the purpose of assisting those affected by the federal government shutdown with Town of La Plata utility charges for residents and businesses by providing an extension to the due date; waiving penalties and fees; establishing a new due date; and all matters generally relating thereto.

The Town Manager noted that the subject text should read "waiving penalties and fees" and not "delaying penalties and fees."

Councilman McCormick moved to adopt Resolution 25-25.

Moved By: Patrick McCormick, seconded by Tyjon Johnson.

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

Passed

5.2. Resolution 25-26 Purchase of Security Cameras (For Introduction and Consideration of

Adoption)

A RESOLUTION concerning

Purchase of Security Cameras

FOR the purpose of authorizing the Town Manager to enter into a contract purchase agreement for the purchase and installation of equipment and components for the security camera system at Town-owned facilities; and all matters generally relating thereto.

Councilman Johnson moved to adopt Resolution 25-26 as presented.

Moved By: Tyjon Johnson, seconded by Paul Guttenberg.

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

Passed

5.3. Resolution 25-27 Town Hall Host Server Replacement (For Introduction and Consideration of Adoption)

A RESOLUTION concerning

Replacement of Town Hall Host Server

FOR the purpose of authorizing the Town Manager to enter into a contract purchase agreement for the purchase and installation of Information Technology equipment at Town Hall; and all matters generally relating thereto.

Councilman Johnson moved to adopt Resolution 25-27 as presented.

Moved By: Tyjon Johnson, seconded by Gregory Sampson, Jr.

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

Passed

6. New Business

6.1. Reports from the Mayor and Town Council

The Mayor and Town Council reported on the Maryland Municipal League's Fall Conference, upcoming town events, and on activities in their respective boards, commissions, and wards.

Mayor James disclosed that an Open Meeting Act complaint against the Town had been lodged with the Open Meetings Compliance Board (OMCB), alleging that the Town Council's goal-setting retreat on September 11, 2025, constituted a closed session not properly noticed to the public. The Town's Special Counsel has provided a response to the OMCB and an OMCB opinion is pending.

6.2. Town Manager's Operational Report (Written Only)

6.3. Treasurer's Report (Written Only)

6.4. Cash Disbursement Report (Written Only)

7. Adjourn

7.1. Adjournment

Mayor James adjourned the meeting at 9:02 PM.

Submitted by:

Shelby Pritchett, Town Clerk

**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: **09/23/2025** Time: **6:00 PM** Location: **La Plata Town Hall** at this meeting, a motion was made by **Councilman Guttenberg** and seconded by **Councilman Sampson** 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)**
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For each citation checked the reasons for closing and topics to be discussed:

- (7)

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
- (8)

Topic: Pending Maryland Department of the Environment litigation

Reason for Closure: Discussion involves communications regarding pending litigation not appropriate for public disclosure

Persons attending closed session:

Jeannine James, Mayor (virtual)	Tyjon Johnson, Mayor Pro Tem	
Councilman Paul Guttenberg	Chuck Stevens, Town Manager	
Councilman Patrick McCormick	Michelle Miner, Assistant Town Manager	
Councilman Gregory Sampson Jr.	Garrett Wozniak, Legal Consultant	

Action(s) Taken:

- (7)

Staff were directed to implement the recommendations presented by Mr. Wozniak concerning ongoing personnel matters.
- (8)

Town staff provided an update on pending litigation with the Maryland Department of the Environment.

Time closed session adjourned: **7:54 PM**

This statement is made by Councilman Tyjon Johnson, Presiding Officer: _____