



TOWN OF LA PLATA
Town Council Minutes
December 9, 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
Michael Payne, Captain
Kelly Phipps, Director of Legislative Services
Shelby Pritchett, Town Clerk

GUESTS: Emily Groo, Zelos (virtual)

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.

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

1.2. Roll Call

The Town Clerk 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 Johnson moved to approve the agenda 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:

Passed

2. Open Meetings Act Disclosures

2.1. Disclosure of Violation of Open Meetings Act

In accordance with the Open Meetings Compliance Board opinion number 326, Mayor James provided the details of the Open Meetings Act violation on September 11, 2025.

2.2. Disclosure of Closed Session on November 18, 2025

In accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act § 3-306(c)(2), Mayor James disclosed the conduct of a closed session on November 18, 2025.

3. Consent Agenda

Councilman Johnson moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Moved By: Tyjon Johnson, seconded by Patrick McCormick.

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

3.1. Adoption of Resolution 25-33 Wastewater Treatment Plant Compliance Support Services

3.2. Adoption of Resolution 25-34 Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment and Action Plan

4. Petitions, Communications, Appearances and Public Comment

4.1. Public Comment

No public speakers were present at this meeting.

5. Matters of Council Discussion

5.1. Town Manager Performance Appraisal Process

Emily Groo provided an overview of the Town Manager performance appraisal process.

5.2. Tourism Zones Ordinance

The Town Manager, Director Dooley, and Director Phipps answered questions from the Town Council. The Town Council reached a consensus to proceed with legislation.

5.3. Direction to the Town Manager on the Appointment of a Town Special Counsel

The Town Council reached a consensus that the agenda item should not move to future agendas. The Town Manager will maintain legal services at the end of the current Special Counsel's contract, should a new Town Attorney not be appointed before the end of the contract with the current Special Counsel. Should expenses incurred for such "bridge" legal services exceed \$20,000, the Town Manager will bring the contract for the "bridge" legal services to the Town Council, in accordance with the Town's existing procurement policy.

5.4. Informational Presentation: Policy Questions for Town Council Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

The Town Manager provided an informational presentation that included 11 items for the council's decision.

Item #1: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy of GFOA minimums and establish appropriate reserves.

Item #2: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy of using reserves for one-time costs.

Item #3: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy to prioritize cutting services to avoid rate increases.

Item #4: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy to set user fees to recover full costs.

Item #5: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy to protect only essential services when faced with budget constraints.

Item #6: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy to reduce or eliminate current service levels if necessary.

Item #7: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy to utilize debt financing as needed, prioritizing pay-as-you-go/grants first.

Item #8: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy to prioritize proactive replacement of aging infrastructure, with reactive repair as needed.

Item #9: The Town Council did not reach a consensus. Councilman Johnson recommended leading the market in compensation with a secondary of matching. Councilman Sampson recommended leading the market in compensation. Councilman McCormick recommended a

departmental approach based on staff needs, with a priority order of match, lead, lag. Councilman Guttenberg recommended matching the market in compensation with market-leading as needed. Mayor James deferred to the discretion of the Town Manager.

Item #10: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy to ensure water/sewer rates fully cover all operations, maintenance, replacement, and capital improvements.

Item #11: The Town Council reached a consensus to adopt the policy to include 3–5 year projections in the budget. Councilman Sampson recommended 10-year projections.

5.5. Historic Preservation Commission Appointments

Councilman Guttenberg moved to approve the appointees of two Historic Preservation Appointments: Jane Hobbs as a voting member and Kathy Hancher as a non-voting member.

Moved By: Paul Guttenberg, seconded by Patrick McCormick.

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

6. Legislation

6.1. Ordinance 25-09 Amendment to Town of La Plata Fiscal Year 2026 Fee Schedule (Second Reading; For Consideration of Adoption)

AN ORDINANCE concerning

Amendment to Town of La Plata Fiscal Year 2026 Fee Schedule

FOR the purpose of amending the Fiscal Year 2026 Fee Schedule, dealing with fees set by the Town of La Plata; and all matters generally relating thereto.

Councilman Johnson moved to adopt Ordinance 25-09.

Moved By: Tyjon Johnson, seconded by Patrick McCormick.

Ayes: None

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

6.2. Ordinance 25-10 Tourism Zones (First Reading; For Introduction)

AN ORDINANCE concerning

Tourism Zones

FOR the purpose of establishing Tourism Zones in the Town of La Plata, as authorized by Maryland Code, Local Government Section 18-401, and to define the administration of a program of incentives to “qualified tourism businesses” located within such Tourism Zones to encourage growth and expansion of tourism-related businesses in the Town of La Plata; and all matters generally relating thereto.

The Town Manager conducted the first reading of Ordinance 25-10.

7. New Business

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

7.2. Treasurer's Report (Written Only)

7.3. Cash Disbursement Report (Written Only)

7.4. Reports from the Mayor and Town Council

The Mayor and Town Council reported on activities in their respective boards and commissions, and on current and upcoming events in the town.

8. Motion for a Closed Session

- 8.1. Statutory Authority to Close Session: § 3-305(b)(1)(i) To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom it has jurisdiction.

Topic: Town Manager Performance Appraisal

Reason for Closure: Discussion concerns evaluation of individual employee.

Councilman Johnson moved to enter closed session under statutory authority § 3-305(b)(1)(i) To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom it has jurisdiction.

Moved By: Tyjon Johnson, seconded by Paul Guttenberg.

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

9. Adjourn

9.1. Adjournment

Mayor James adjourned the meeting at 8:36 PM.

Submitted by:

Shelby Pritchett, Town Clerk