

Censure Resolution 26-51 Cross Reference Table: Assertions Paired with Underlying References

Draft Resolution Section	Referenced Authority	Specific Provision	Factual Assertion Made in Resolution	Underlying Fact in Source Document
Whereas 1	Town Charter	Article III, § C3-1 Article III, § C3-6	Legislative powers are vested in a 5-member Council; official actions require favorable votes of a majority.	<i>"All legislative powers of the town shall be vested in a Council consisting of a Mayor and four (4) Councilmen..." (§ C3-1)</i> <i>"...no ordinance shall be approved nor any other action taken without the favorable votes of a majority..." (§ C3-6)</i>
Whereas 2	Rules of Procedure	Section 1-2(H) Section 1-2(I)	Mandates carrying out majority will and acting as a body.	<i>"The will of the majority must be carried out; and the rights of the minority must be preserved;" (§ 1-2(H))</i> <i>"The Town Council must act as a body." (§ 1-2(I))</i>
Whereas 3	Town Charter	Article IV, § C4-3(E) Article V, § C5-1 Article V, § C5-5(A) Article V, § C5-6	When a Town Manager is appointed, administrative duties revert to the Manager, and Council must deal with service solely through the Manager.	<i>"All powers and duties listed in Subsections A, B, C and D above shall revert to the Town Manager..." (§ C4-3(E), § C5-1, § C5-1(A))</i> <i>"Except for the purpose of inquiry, the Council and its members shall deal with the administrative service solely through the Town Manager..." (§ C5-6)</i>
Whereas 4	Code of Civility	Resolution 26-25 (§ I.E, § II.A, § II.C, § II.E)	Governs conduct of officials; requires respecting democratic processes and discussing outcomes constructively when a perspective does not prevail.	<i>"If your perspective does not prevail, be willing to discuss the outcome constructively." (§ I.E)</i> <i>"Enhance democratic processes individually and collectively." (§ II.A)</i> <i>"Distinguish your opinions from facts. Ensure your statements of fact are accurate and verifiable." (§ II.C)</i> <i>"Be accountable for your words and actions." (§ II.E)</i>
Whereas 5	MDOT Written Guidance	Email from Vinn White (MDOT) to Town Manager (July 20, 2026, 4:33 PM)	MDOT communicated written openness to having either the mayor or a council member represent the Town.	<i>"Again, we need executive-level attention and doers, so we are open to arrangements (mayor or council member) that helps give shine and delivers."</i>

Draft Resolution Section	Referenced Authority	Specific Provision or Other Reference	Factual Assertion Made in Resolution	Underlying Fact in Source Document
Whereas 6	Council Action	Regular Session Vote <i>(July 28, 2026)</i>	Council formally nominated Councilor Paul C. Guttenberg to serve as delegate to the Safer Maryland Coalition.	During the July 28, 2026 regular Council session (Agenda Item 5.4), a motion was made and properly seconded to nominate Councilor Paul Guttenberg as the Town's representative to the MDOT Safer Maryland Coalition. The motion passed by a 4–1 vote.
Whereas 7	Executive Transmittal	Email from Chuck Stevens to Vinn White & Councilor Guttenberg <i>(July 29, 2026, 7:39 AM)</i>	Town Manager officially transmitted Council's nomination to MDOT per administrative duties.	Subject: Safer Maryland Coalition: Town Of La Plata Representation <i>"Last night, Town Council nominated Councilor Paul Guttenberg to represent the Town of La Plata on the Safer Maryland Coalition."</i> (Town Manager Email, July 29, 2026)
Whereas 8	Mayors Unilateral Intervention	Email from Jeannine James to MDOT Leadership & MD Lt. Gov <i>(July 29, 2026, 7:48 AM)</i>	Mayor sent unauthorized communication 9 minutes later to MDOT officials and the Lt. Governor challenging Council's decision and qualifications of the nominee.	<i>"...the Town Council designated another councilmember to participate...the [Council's] designation does not align with the intent or basis of your invitation. It also places this opportunity... in the hands of individuals who are newly elected..."</i> (Mayor James Email, July 29, 2026)
Whereas 9	MDOT Decision Rescission	Email from Vinn White to Town Manager & Councilor Guttenberg <i>(July 31, 2026, 11:48 AM)</i>	MDOT rescinded its acceptance of the Town's delegate following the intervention.	"After consultation with our leadership, I regret to inform that this particular invitation is not transferrable or can be further extended."
Whereas 10	Violations Summary	Charter § C3-6, § C5-6 Rules § 1-2(H), § 1-2(I) Res 26-25 § I.E, § II.A, § II.C, § II.E	Asserts the Mayor's conduct violated Charter, Rules of Procedure, and Code of Civility provisions.	Direct conflict with majority rule (§ C3-6), mandatory communication through Town Manager (§ C5-6), and duty to support democratic outcomes (§ II.A), and all other governance and policy documents referenced above in this table.
Section 1 (Action)	Censure	Charter § C5-6 Rules § 1-2(H), § 1-2(I) Res 26-25 § I.E, § II.A, § II.C, § II.E	Formally censures the Mayor for unauthorized interference, boundary violations, and failure to uphold civility standards.	Directly supports the presented facts and findings in the draft Resolution into a formal censure vote of the Council which reaffirms the standards that members of this body are held accountable to uphold.

Draft Resolution 26-51

Introduced By:

Councilman Paul C. Guttenberg

Date Introduced:

August 18, 2026

Date Adopted:

Date Effective:

A RESOLUTION concerning Censure of Mayor Jeannine E. James for Violations of the Town Charter, Town Council Rules of Procedure, and Code of Civility.

FOR the purpose of formally censuring Mayor Jeannine E. James for unauthorized actions taken to undermine a formal vote and decision of the Town Council, interference with the administrative duties of the Town Manager, and non-compliance with established standards of governance and civility; and all matters related thereto.

WHEREAS, under Article III, Section C3-1 and Section C3-6 of the Town Charter, all legislative powers of the Town are vested in a five-member Council consisting of the Mayor and four Councilmen, and all official actions require the favorable votes of a majority of the Council; and

WHEREAS, Section 1-2(H) and Section 1-2(I) of the Town Council Rules of Procedure mandate that *"the will of the majority must be carried out"* and *"the Town Council must act as a body"*; and

WHEREAS, under Article IV, Section C4-3(E), Article V, Section C5-1, Section C5-5(A), and Section C5-6 of the Town Charter, when a Town Manager is appointed, all administrative duties revert to the Town Manager, and members of the Council are expressly required to deal with the administrative service solely through the Town Manager; and

WHEREAS, on April 28, 2026, the Town Council adopted Resolution 26-25 (Code of Civility), requiring elected officials to respect democratic processes, focus on the merits of issues, discuss outcomes constructively when their perspective does not prevail, and refrain from undermining collective Council decisions; and

WHEREAS, on July 20, 2026, Senior Advisor Vinn White of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) provided written guidance to Town Manager Chuck Stevens regarding Town representation on the Safer Maryland Coalition Local Leaders Cohort, confirming that MDOT was open to either a mayor or council member by stating: *"Again, we need executive-level attention and does, so we are open to arrangements (mayor or council member) that helps give shine and delivers;"* and

WHEREAS, relying on MDOT's written guidance provided to the Town Manager, the Town Council responding to agenda item 5.4, during its regular session on July 28, 2026, formally nominated Councilor Paul C. Guttenberg to serve as the Town of La Plata's representative to the Safer Maryland Coalition; and

WHEREAS, on July 29, 2026, at 7:39 AM, Town Manager Chuck Stevens officially communicated the Town Council's nomination to MDOT in accordance with his executive duties under Charter Section C5-5; and

WHEREAS, on July 29, 2026, at 7:48 AM, Mayor Jeannine E. James, acting without the knowledge, authority, or consent of the Town Council, sent a unilateral communication to MDOT leadership and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor asserting that the Council's nomination *"does not align with the intent or basis"* of the invitation and questioning the qualifications of the Council's designated representative as *"individuals who are newly elected and are only beginning to establish their own engagement"*; and

WHEREAS, this unilateral intervention by Mayor James leads members of this body to reasonably believe her actions resulted in MDOT rescinding its acceptance of the Town's delegate on July 31, 2026, thereby subverting a lawful decision of the Town Council majority and depriving the Town of its selected representative leadership on the Local Leaders Cohort; and

WHEREAS, such conduct constitutes a direct violation of Town Charter § C3-6 and § C5-6, Town Council Rules of Procedure § 1-2(H) and § 1-2(I), and Resolution 26-25 (Code of Civility, § I.E, § II.A, § II.C, and § II.E); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA:

1. **Section 1.** That the Council of the Town of La Plata hereby formally CENSURES Mayor Jeannine E. James for unauthorized interference with an official decision of the Town Council majority, non-compliance with Town Council Rules of Procedure § 1-2(H) and § 1-2(I), violation of the administrative boundaries established in Charter § C5-6, and failure to uphold the standards set forth in Resolution 26-25 (Code of Civility, § I.E, § II.A, § II.C, and § II.E).
2. **Section 2.** That the Town Council reaffirms that intergovernmental delegations and legislative policy decisions reside collectively with the Town Council, and that no individual Council member, including the Mayor, possesses individual authority to countermand or undermine an official vote of the body.
3. **Section 3.** That this Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

From: Chuck Stevens cstevens@townoflaplata.org 
Subject: FW: Safer Maryland Coalition
Date: July 31, 2026 at 12:33 PM
To: Paul Guttenberg pguttenberg@townoflaplata.org

CS

Councilor.

Please see the email below from MDOT to me, highlighted sections. This is the background material I used to create the agenda item for the July 28 meeting.

Chuck

Chuck Stevens
Town Manager
Town of La Plata
305 Queen Anne Street
La Plata, Maryland 20646
cstevens@townoflaplata.org
Phone: 301-658-6656

From: Vinn White <vwhite@mdot.maryland.gov>
Sent: Monday, July 20, 2026 4:33 PM
To: Chuck Stevens <cstevens@townoflaplata.org>
Cc: Matthew Mickler <MMickler@mdot.maryland.gov>
Subject: Safer Maryland Coalition

You don't often get email from vwhite@mdot.maryland.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Chuck--

It was great speaking with you last week. As promised, I'm sharing a one-pager describing some of what we discussed. Read-ahead/background material will be circulated to members ahead of the call on Sept 1st. Again, we need executive-level attention and doers, so we are open to arrangements (mayor or council member) that helps give shine and delivers.

Please reach back to us if you have any other questions.

Best,

Vinn

- - - - -



Vinn White

Senior Advisor for Policy and Innovation

The Secretary's Office (TSO)

Office | 410.865.1092

Email | vwhite@mdot.maryland.gov

Maryland Department of Transportation

7201 Corporate Center Drive, Hanover, MD 21076



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Serious About Safety – Safer
Maryland Coalition Local Leader...
16 KB



Safer Maryland Coalition: Town Of La Plata Representation



Chuck Stevens

To: Vinn White <vwhite@mdot.maryland.gov>

Cc: Matthew Mickler <MMickler@mdot.maryland.gov>; Paul Guttenberg; Michelle Miner



← Reply



Reply all



- Forward



Wed 7/29/2026 7:39 AM

Flag for follow up. Completed on 8/2/2026.

Good morning, Vinn.

Last night, Town Council nominated Councilor Paul Guttenberg to represent the Town of La Plata on the Safer Maryland Coalition.

Councilor Guttenberg has served on the Town’s Planning Commission since taking office in 2025 and played an instrumental role in developing the Town’s Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) for roads and transportation—which, coincidentally, was approved during last night’s meeting. His experience and perspective will bring strong local value to the Local Leaders Cohort.

Please coordinate directly with Councilor Guttenberg (cc'd) as the meeting schedule and logistics are finalized.

Thanks,

Chuck

Chuck Stevens
Town Manager
Town of La Plata
305 Queen Anne Street
La Plata, Maryland 20646
cstevens@townoflaplata.org
Phone: 301-658-6656

← Reply

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From: Jeannine James jjames@townoflaplata.org

Subject: RE: Safer Maryland Coalition Invitation

Date: July 29, 2026 at 7:48 AM

To: Joe McAndrew jmcandrew@mdot.maryland.gov

Cc: Geri Byrd geri.byrd@maryland.gov, Jonathan Rogers JRogers4@mdot.maryland.gov, Matthew Mickler MMickler@mdot.maryland.gov, Heather (Boehmer) Owens howens1@mdot.maryland.gov, Katie Thomson kthomson@mdot.maryland.gov, Lt.governor@maryland.gov

JJ

Good morning Secretary Thomson,

Thank you for the invitation to participate in the Safer Maryland Coalition. I am extremely honored. As you know, I am deeply committed to advancing a safer Maryland and have worked closely with MDOT and our regional partners for many years.

Your invitation was extended specifically to the Mayor based on MDOT's assessment of the office's role, leadership, and longstanding engagement in transportation safety initiatives. Following receipt of the invitation, the **Town Council designated another councilmember to participate. While I appreciate their interest in supporting this effort, the designation does not align with the intent or basis of your invitation. It also places this opportunity—one grounded in relationships and collaboration developed over many years—in the hands of individuals who are newly elected** and are only beginning to establish their own engagement with regional partners.

I felt it important to communicate this context directly to ensure clarity and transparency. I remain fully supportive of MDOT's leadership and the coalition's mission, and I value the work being done to strengthen transportation safety across Maryland.

I appreciate MDOT's continued partnership and the trust you have placed in the Mayor's Office over the years. My commitment to advancing a safer Maryland remains steadfast, and I look forward to continuing our collaboration in every appropriate capacity. Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to engage in this important work.

Respectfully,

Jeannine E. James

Mayor, Town of La Plata



305 Queen Anne Street
La Plata, Maryland 20646

jjames@townoflaplata.org

Phone: 301-798-4163

From: Joe McAndrew

Sent: Thursday, June 25, 2026 8:05 AM

To: Jeannine James

Cc: 'Geri Byrd' ; Jonathan Rogers ; Matthew Mickler ; Heather (Boehmer) Owens ; Katie Thomson

Subject: Re: Safer Maryland Coalition Invitation

You don't often get email from jmcandrew@mdot.maryland.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Good morning Mayor James -

Following up on Secretary Thomson's invitation from earlier this month, I wanted to share my excitement for the Safer Maryland Coalition as a partnership effort to deliver safer outcomes across Maryland's transportation network. With about 65% of roadway deaths occurring on state-owned roads, MDOT is committed to bold action and a "business as unusual" approach to bend the curve to achieve our Vision Zero mandate. But, we know we know we can't get there alone – action must be a shared responsibility with local leaders such as yourself. I hope you will join us in this important work to learn and act together to improve roadway safety across Maryland.

To that end, I would like to schedule 30 minutes with you or a designee to discuss the program including program outcomes, logistics, time commitment, and benefits to you and your constituents.

I'm copying Heather Owens from my team to help coordinate schedules. I'm looking forward to connecting with you soon.

- Joe

From: Katie Thomson <kthomson@mdot.maryland.gov>

Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2026 9:37 AM

To: 'jjames@townoflaplata.org' <jjames@townoflaplata.org>

Cc: 'arunak.miller@maryland.gov' <arunak.miller@maryland.gov>; 'Geri Byrd' <geri.byrd@maryland.gov>; Jonathan Rogers <JRogers4@mdot.maryland.gov>; Joe McAndrew <jmcandrew@mdot.maryland.gov>; Matthew Mickler <MMickler@mdot.maryland.gov>

Subject: Safer Maryland Coalition Invitation

Dear Mayor James,

The Maryland State Plan provides a vision to make Maryland safer, including an all-of - government effort to prioritize the creation of Creating Safer Communities. At the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), we aim to fulfill this charge by providing the safest transportation network in the nation. As a Vision Zero state, we are committed to eliminating all vehicle-related deaths and serious injuries on our roadways by 2030. Despite our proactive efforts in engineering, education, and enforcement, too many lives are still lost on our roadways. The loss of life and lifelong physical and emotional injury is heartbreaking, and its toll on residents is staggering.

In response, in May 2025, MDOT announced the launch of the Serious About Safety initiative, MDOT's all-hands on deck call to expedite progress and sharply bend the curve on roadway fatalities across Maryland through bold action. The initiative leverages the full portfolio of MDOT's modes and partnerships for action to deliver the safest transportation system in the country. It also builds on the national leading Work Zone Safety Work Group's recommendations that are now implemented.

While MDOT is committed to doing the hard work to improve safety, we know we cannot reach our goals alone. This effort must be done in partnership. With that in mind, we are pleased to invite you to join in this critical initiative by participating in the Safer Maryland Coalition.

Convened by Lieutenant Governor Miller and me, the Safer Maryland Coalition will bring together a small group of elected officials from across the State to learn, share, and take action to improve transportation safety. You have shown a commitment to bold safety

action to improve transportation safety. You have shown a commitment to bold safety action, and your participation will help spur the courageous thinking and action we need to save lives.

The coalition will meet four times over the next year. Beginning with building a common understanding of the transportation safety landscape and proven best practices for improving safety, the group's focus will quickly turn toward commitments that participants can make within their domains as well as continually bolder action we can achieve through collective advocacy and effort. MDOT looks forward to supporting your efforts to stand up your safety commitments throughout the course of the year.

I hope that you will join this important initiative. Information about scheduling of the first convening of this group will be shared soon. In the meantime, please respond indicating your interest participating in the coalition. At any point, please contact Jonathan Rogers, Policy Advisor at MDOT, at jrogers4@mdot.maryland.gov or 410-382-5018 with questions.

Sincerely,
Katie Thomson

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA
Resolution 26-21

Introduced By:	Mayor Jeannine E. James, by request
Date Introduced:	April 28, 2026
Date Adopted:	April 28, 2026
Date Effective:	April 28, 2026

A RESOLUTION concerning

Revision of Town Council Rules of Procedure

FOR the purpose of revising the rules and guidelines by which the Council of the Town of La Plata (Town Council) operates; and all matters related thereto.

* * * * *

WHEREAS, the Town Council desires to conduct its affairs in a timely and efficient manner; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council developed rules and guidelines by which the Council will operate; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the Town of La Plata Rules of Procedures, dated August 24, 2021, amended October 18, 2022, and further amended January 14, 2023, are hereby incorporated by reference as Exhibit A to Resolution 26-21.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA that the Council of the Town of La Plata Rules of Procedure attached hereto as Exhibit A are hereby adopted and incorporated by reference; and

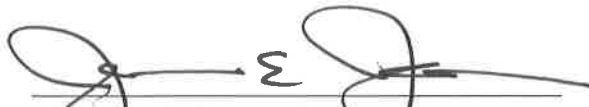
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the Council of the Town of La Plata on April 28, 2026

SEAL:



COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA


Jeannine E. James, Mayor


Paul C. Guttenberg, Councilman


Patrick McCormick, Councilman


Gregory Sampson, Jr., Councilman

ATTEST:


Shelby Pritchett
Town Clerk


Tyjon C. Johnson, Councilman

Date April 28, 2026



**Town of La Plata
Town Council
Rules of Procedure**

Revised April 28, 2026

Introduction

The rules of procedure were designed and adopted for the benefit and convenience of the Council of the Town of La Plata (Town Council) and are intended to describe the rules and guidelines by which the Council operates. Additionally, the rules of procedure will help the Council conduct its affairs in a timely and efficient manner and serve as a quick reference for resolving policy and procedural questions during meetings. The rules of procedure do not supersede the provisions of the Town Charter or Code of Ordinances and do not create substantive rights for third parties or participants in proceedings before the Town Council. Further, the Town Council reserves the right to suspend or amend the rules of procedure whenever a majority of Town Council decides to do so. The failure of the Town Council to strictly comply with the rules of procedure shall not invalidate any action of the Town Council.

The rules of procedure may be reviewed and adopted annually and following an election year, at the organization meeting of Town Council in May. Revisions to the rules of procedure may be proposed and adopted during any regular meeting of the Town Council by means of an affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the Town Council and become effective upon adoption.

Section	Topic	Page
1	Purpose of Rules of Procedure	2
2	Meetings	3
3	Officers and Employees	4
4	The Agenda	5
5	Order of Business for Council Meetings	7
6	Rules of Procedure for Town Council Meetings	10
7	Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Authorities	17
8	General Operating Policy	18

SECTION 1 – PURPOSE AND BASIC PRINCIPLES

Section 1-1. Purpose of Rules of Procedure

- A. To enable the Town Council to transact business fully, expeditiously, and efficiently while affording every opportunity to citizens to witness the operations of government;
- B. To protect the rights of each individual Town Council Member;
- C. To preserve a spirit of cooperation among Town Council Members;
- D. To determine the will of the Town Council on any matter; and
- E. To further advance the core values outlined in the Town of La Plata's Strategic Plan

Section 1-2. Basic Principles Underlying Rules of Procedure

- A. The business of the Town Council should proceed in the most efficient manner possible;
- B. Town Council's rules of procedure must be followed consistently;
- C. Town Council's actions should be the result of a decision on the merits and not a manipulation of the procedural rules;
- D. Only one subject may claim the attention of Town Council at one time;
- E. Each item presented for consideration is entitled to full and free discussion;
- F. Every Town Council Member has equal rights to participate and vote on the issues;
- G. Every Town Council Member must have equal opportunity to participate in decision making;
- H. The will of the majority must be carried out; and the rights of the minority must be preserved; and
- I. The Town Council must act as a body.

SECTION 2 – MEETINGS

Section 2-1. Adoption of an Annual Calendar and Meeting Schedule

The time and place of the meetings of the La Plata Town Council shall be established annually with the adoption of a resolution and calendar that sets forth the regular meetings (which may include scheduled and advertised public hearings), Town Hall meetings, and other standing meetings, where applicable.

Regular meetings and public hearings. In general, regular meetings of the Town Council, which may include scheduled and advertised public hearings, will be held on the second, and fourth Tuesday of each month beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, located on the first floor at Town Hall. Under exceptional or extenuating circumstances, Town Council meetings may convene virtually. Regular meetings and public hearings are live streamed via the online meeting platform specified on the Town’s website and meeting agenda.

Town Hall meetings. The La Plata Town Council may host Town Hall meetings each year with the location and topic of discussion announced prior to the event. The location and topic will be influenced by current Town events, projects, and priorities.

Section 2-2. Special Meetings

The Town Council may schedule special meetings as it deems necessary with the dates and time adopted as part of the annual calendar or announced in accordance with all legal requirements. Special meetings shall be called by the Town Clerk upon the written request of the Mayor, a majority of the members of the Town Council, or the Chief Executive Officer; no business shall be transacted at a special meeting but that for which it shall be called, unless the Town Council agrees unanimously to consider such action.

Section 2-3. Pre-Organizational Meeting

In those years in which Town Council elections are held, the Town Council, including members-elect of the body, may meet in a work session prior to the organizational meeting to discuss appointments as members of or liaisons to committees, boards, commissions and multijurisdictional agencies. During the discussion of the full Town Council, consideration will be given to a Town Council Member’s level of interest, experience, his or her specific schedule, and the location, time, and frequency of the meeting(s).

Section 2-4. Organizational Meeting

In those years in which Town Council elections are held, an organizational meeting of the Town Council shall be held on the second Monday in May. The purpose of the organizational meeting shall be the appointment of Town Council Members as members of or liaisons to committees, commissions, boards and multijurisdictional agencies, the appointment of Mayor Pro Tem and the conduct of such organizational business as may come before the Council.

Appointments of Council Members shall be announced by the Mayor at the organizational meeting and shall become effective when approved by a vote of Town Council. If desired, the Town Council may review appointments on an annual basis.

The Town Council will acknowledge and adopt the Rules of Procedure at its organizational meeting.

Section 2-5. Rescheduling of Meetings

In the event of circumstances preventing the conduct of a regularly scheduled meeting, the Town Council may reschedule such meetings, unless already otherwise indicated on the adopted annual calendar. Appropriate notifications regarding rescheduling of meetings will be made in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

SECTION 3 – OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

Section 3-1. Mayor

The Mayor shall serve as presiding officer over all meetings of the Town Council and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Charter and Town Code or general law.

The Mayor shall have the right to vote on matters before the Town Council.

The Mayor Pro Tem serves as presiding officer in the absence of the Mayor. In the case of the absence from any meeting of the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, the members of the Town Council present shall choose one of their number as temporary presiding officer.

Section 3-2. Town Manager

The Town Council shall appoint a Town Manager who shall be chosen in conformity with the provisions of the Charter and who shall exercise the powers and discharge the duties required of him/her, subject to the approval of the Town Council. The Town Manager shall exercise administrative supervision and control over all departments of the Town government and have general supervision over all improvements, works, and services.

The Town Manager shall attend all meetings of the Town Council, unless otherwise excused by Town Council, and shall recommend to the Town Council, for adoption, such measures as he/she may deem expedient or necessary.

Section 3-3. Town Clerk

The Town Clerk shall serve as the Clerk to the Council and shall attend every open meeting of the Town Council, unless otherwise excused by the Town Manager. The Town Clerk shall maintain an accurate account of the proceedings of the Town Council, including all motions and subsequent votes, which shall be conducted and recorded in compliance with legal requirements.

Statements to be Included in the Minutes. Any member of the Town Council who wishes to have a statement or comment included in the minutes shall make that known prior to making the statement and shall provide the Town Clerk with a written copy of his or her statement.

Section 3-4. Department Heads

The head of any department, or any officer or employee of the Town when requested by the Town Council or the Town Manager, shall attend any regular, adjourned or special meeting and confer with the Town Council on matters relating to the Town.

SECTION 4 – THE AGENDA

Section 4-1. Publishing the Agenda

At the direction of the Town Manager, the Town Clerk shall be responsible for the publication of agendas for all noticed and scheduled meetings of the Town Council.

Section 4-2. Adding Items to the Agenda

The Town Clerk, in collaboration with the Town Manager, shall prepare a proposed agenda to review with the Mayor prior to the scheduled Town Council meeting. Any Town Council Member or Department Head that would like to add items to the proposed agenda should submit such items to the Town Manager at least seven (7) business days before the meeting. Materials that will accompany the agenda item shall be provided to the Town Clerk no later than noon on the Thursday prior to the scheduled meeting. Last-minute submissions are discouraged but may be added to a meeting agenda, where applicable, subject to a vote of the Town Council at the meeting approving a change [addition] to the published agenda. This will allow Council consideration of a matter that requires action expeditiously but was not known in time to be presented during the normal agenda development process.

When an individual Town Council Member requests an agenda item be added pursuant to this Section, such item shall be placed on the agenda of the first regular meeting of the month for discussion only. The Town Council Member must submit the request and all related documentation to the Town Manager at least seven (7) business days prior to the first regular meeting of the month.¹ During this initial discussion, the Council shall determine, by consensus, whether there is sufficient interest to move forward with the proposed item. At the discretion of the presiding officer, discussion time may be limited to 3 minutes per council member to ensure an orderly and efficient meeting. Following discussion, if the Council determines there is interest to proceed, the Council may take action, including but not limited to: referral to a Town Council committee; referral to the Town Manager for development by Town staff; or placement on a future Council regular agenda for further consideration and action.

Section 4-3. Distribution of the Agenda

The Town Clerk shall publish agendas and related materials (the agenda packet) to the Town's website in a timely manner to allow the public and elected officials time to review.

The agenda packet for meetings held on a Tuesday will be published before noon on the Friday prior to the meeting date. If key information is outstanding, the Town Manager may delay the publication of the packet or reschedule agenda items.

Section 4-4. Town Council Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda

¹ Any background information or summaries provided by an individual Council member for an agenda item shall be clearly marked with a disclaimer such as "not staff product" or "by request". The Town Manager will provide the materials to the Director of Legislative Services, who will ensure compliance, with review by the Assistant Town Manager and Town Manager.

- A. At the beginning of every regular meeting the Town Council will have the opportunity to review items on the agenda and, if necessary, the consent agenda to approve or remove items from the agenda.
- B. In the case of the consent agenda, unless one or more members of the Town Council has a reason to discuss and/or debate one or more items, contents of the Consent Agenda will be voted on collectively. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the majority of the Town Council.
- C. Under no circumstances can anything be added to or removed from the agenda after the Town Council has voted to accept the agenda for that meeting.

SECTION 5 – ORDER OF BUSINESS FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

Section 5-1. Order of Business

- A. The order of business for the regular Town Council meeting will be established in a written agenda and may include the following: Approval of Agenda; Consent Agenda; Community and Staff Presentations; Reports of the Town Council; Staff Reports; Ordinances and Resolutions; Unfinished and New Business; Awards and Acknowledgements; Public Comment; Closed Meetings; Public Hearings; and other pertinent business of the Town Council.
- B. During Town Council Reports, there will be no direct question-and-answer period directed at staff.
- C. The order of business for any special Town Council meeting will be established in a written agenda and may include the following: Ordinances and Resolutions, Action Items, Public Hearings, Closed Meetings, and other pertinent business of the Town Council.

Section 5-2. Public Comment Participation

- A. No person, other than a member of the Town Council, Town Manager, or Town Attorney, shall have the right to discuss any matter in a meeting of the Town Council, unless by consent of a majority of the Council, or when that person is scheduled to appear before the Council on an agenda item.

- B. The public comment participation portion of the agenda is set aside for those individuals who wish to address the Town Council for no more than three (3) minutes each. Individuals may not yield their time to other speakers. Individuals need not give prior notice to the Town to speak during the public comment participation portion of the agenda.
- C. Public comment participation shall be for the purpose of allowing members of the public to address any Town business; however, public comment participation is not intended to serve as a forum for debate with the Council.

Section 5-3. Public Hearings

- A. Public hearings before the Town Council may be scheduled for any regular or special meeting of Council and require at least fifteen (15) days' notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the Town, or as may be required by Town Code or state law.
- B. Promptly at the hour set on the day of the public hearing, the members of the Council, the Town Clerk, the Chief Executive Officer, any relevant Town Staff, the Applicant/Petitioner, and those members of the public who wish to address the Town Council shall appear in person in the Council Chambers.
- C. The procedures for public hearings are as follows:
 - 1. Call to Order
 - 2. Review of Public Notices
 - 3. Recommendations:
 - a. Summary of Town Staff report and recommendation and/or;
 - b. Planning Commission Recommendation
 - 4. Applicant/Petitioner presentation and testimony
 - 5. Questions by the Town Council. [The Town Council may ask questions of the Applicant/Petitioner or Town staff.]
 - 6. Written documents are entered into the record.
 - 7. Speakers (signed up) are called on by the presiding officer. At the discretion of the presiding officer, time may be limited to 3 minutes and may not be yielded.
 - 8. Additional questions by Town Council.
 - 9. When the hearing is concluded, the Town Council will not hear further comments or questions during the meeting. If the record is kept open for a specific number of days, written comments should be submitted, by the deadline, and to the attention of the Town Clerk, in person at Town

Hall, or email legislative@townoflaplata.org.

- D. The following provisions shall be applied to Applicant/Petitioners and their agents who cannot participate in person due to exceptional or extenuating circumstances.
1. On or before the day of a meeting, an Applicant/Petitioner or the agent of an Applicant/Petitioner who wishes to participate through electronic means when an in-person meeting has been scheduled must notify the presiding officer that the member is unable to attend the meeting in person.
 2. Following receipt of notification as required by paragraph 5-4(D)(1), remote participation by electronic communication is authorized if the Town Clerk makes arrangements for the voice of the remote participant to be heard by all persons who wish to participate or attend utilizing electronic means.
 3. At the start of the meeting, the presiding officer shall advise the Town Council of the request for participation by remote electronic communication. If the conditions and requirements of this Policy have been met, the Town Council shall approve the request by majority vote. If participation through electronic communication means is approved, the Town Clerk shall record in the minutes of the meeting the means from which the member participated (in person or online meeting platform).

Section 5-4. Closed Meetings

- A. Generally, all meetings of public bodies must be open to the public, except in special and appropriate circumstances when a meeting may be closed in compliance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act. The Town Council must create an agenda and must affirmatively pass a roll call vote on a motion in open session that does the following:
1. Identifies the subject matter of the closed meeting;
 2. States the purpose of the closed meeting; and
 3. Makes specific reference to the statutory exemptions relied on to close the meeting.
- B. Once in a closed meeting, only the matters stated on the agenda and in the motion are allowed to be discussed.

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA
RULES OF PROCEDURE
April 28, 2026

- C. The Town Council may invite members of the public or Town Staff to attend a closed meeting if their presence reasonably aids the Town Council in its consideration of an issue.
- D. Following a closed meeting the Town Council must disclose, in the minutes of the next open session, what topics were discussed, who attended the closed session, and what actions were taken.
- E. Any individual attending a closed meeting should respect the Town Council's decision that the subject matter is too sensitive for public discussion and should treat the closed meeting discussion as confidential.
- F. All formal decisions of the Town Council, and all votes relating thereto, shall be conducted and recorded in an open meeting in accordance with applicable Town Code and State law.
- G. The Town Council may provide direction to Town staff in a closed meeting as may be appropriate to guide subsequent staff actions.

SECTION 6 – RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

Section 6-1. Quorum

- A. Three (3) members of the Town Council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. No ordinance shall be passed, resolution adopted, nor any other action taken without the favorable votes of a majority of the members of the Town Council. No vote or question decided at a stated meeting shall be reconsidered at a special meeting unless all members are present, and three of them concur.
- B. Quorum refers to the number of members present at a meeting, not the number of members voting on an issue. If no quorum is present or if a quorum is lost, the Town Council can only (i) adjourn, (ii) recess, or (iii) take steps to obtain a quorum.
- C. If a quorum fails to be established, those attending may adjourn to such other time prior to the next regular meeting as they may determine and the Town

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA
RULES OF PROCEDURE
April 28, 2026

Clerk shall enter such adjournment in the minute book of the Town Council and shall notify absent members thereof in the same manner as required for special meetings.

- D. Conflicts of interest shall be disclosed, and one may only participate or act in accordance with Chapter 20 Ethics of the Code of the Town of La Plata.

Section 6-2. Preservation of Order

- A. At meetings of the Town Council, the presiding officer shall preserve order and decorum and decide on questions of order, subject to appeal to the Town Council. If a member of Town Council transgresses the rules of the Town Council, the presiding officer shall call him or her to order.
- B. No member of the Town Council shall leave the Council Chamber while the Town Council is in regular meeting without the permission of the presiding officer.
- C. The presiding officer has the authority to call a brief recess at any time.
- D. The presiding officer may adjourn the meeting without the Town Council's vote or appeal in an emergency.
- E. The right of a member of the Town Council to address the Town Council on a question of personal privilege shall be limited to cases in which his/her integrity, character, or motives are assailed, questioned or impugned. A member addressing the Town Council on a question of personal privilege shall first address the presiding officer and be recognized. A second is not required.
- F. Whenever a question arises as to the proper interpretation of a rule of procedure, or in the absence of a rule to govern a point of procedure, the presiding officer of the Town Council shall resolve the question.
- G. Any member of the Town Council may appeal to the Town Council from the ruling of the presiding officer. If the appeal is seconded, the member making the appeal may briefly state his/her reason for the appeal and the presiding officer may briefly explain his/her ruling, but there shall be no debate on the appeal, and no other member shall participate in the discussion. The presiding officer shall then put the question: "Shall the decision of the presiding officer be sustained?" If the majority of the members present vote "no," the ruling of the

presiding officer is overruled; otherwise, it is sustained.

Section 6-3. Town Council Members Addressing Town Council

- A. A member of the Town Council shall seek recognition to speak from the presiding officer, shall address only the question before the Town Council and shall refrain from impugning the motives of any other Town Council Member's argument or vote. No discussion of a sectarian or political nature shall be allowed. No member shall interrupt another while speaking, except to make a point of order, the point to be briefly stated to the presiding officer.
- B. No member of the Town Council shall speak more than once on the same question until every member choosing to speak shall have done so, or for a longer time than ten minutes on any question, without the express permission of the Town Council.

Section 6-4. Action by the Town Council

- A. Action on ordinances shall be required in accordance with Town Code.
- B. Items of business will be considered and dealt with one at a time, and a new proposal may not be put forth until action on the preceding one has been concluded.
- C. When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, and the proposal will not obligate the Town Council in any manner nor finally decide an issue before the Town Council, action can be taken upon the unanimous consent of the Town Council Members present, without a motion having been introduced. However, unless agreed to by unanimous consent, all proposed action of the Town Council must be approved by vote under these rules. Silence, or the lack of spoken dissent, is taken as consent.
- D. If an agenda item requires a public hearing, action by the Town Council may be taken at the same meeting as the public hearing or may be deferred to a later meeting.

Section 6-5. Motions

- A. Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA
RULES OF PROCEDURE
April 28, 2026

- B. Any member of the Town Council, even if he or she is serving as the presiding officer, may make a motion.
- C. A member may make only one motion at a time.
- D. Except for matters stipulated in these rules of procedure, all motions require a second and a motion dies for lack of a second.

Section 6-6. Receipt of Motions When Question is Under Consideration

- A. When a motion is under consideration, no motion shall be received, except as follows: to postpone indefinitely, to amend, to refer to a board, commission or committee, to postpone to a certain time, to limit or extend debate, to move the previous question or to lay on the table.
- B. The following motions are debatable: to postpone indefinitely, to refer to a board, commission or committee or to postpone to a certain time. A motion to amend is debatable only if the main question is. The other motions named in subsection A. of this section are not debatable.
- C. The following motions are amendable: to amend, to refer to a committee, to postpone to a certain time, and to limit or extend debate. The other motions named in subsection A. of this section are not amendable. All motions require a simple majority, except for the motions to limit or extend debate or move the previous question, which require a two-thirds majority.

Section 6-7. Debate

- A. The presiding officer shall state the motion and then open the floor to debate. The presiding officer shall preside over the debate according to the following general principles:
 - 1. The maker of the motion is entitled to speak first;
 - 2. A member who has not spoken on the issue shall be recognized before someone who has already spoken;
 - 3. A member of the Town Council may vote against his or her motion but may not speak against his or her motion.

4. The presiding officer may participate in the debate prior to declaring the matter ready for a vote.
5. Town Council Members shall not engage in electronic communication amongst themselves regarding a motion that is on the floor for debate.

Section 6-8. Duty to Vote

If there is an abstention, it shall be the responsibility of the abstaining member to state the reason and for the Town Clerk to note the abstention and the reason for abstaining in the minutes for the record.

Section 6-9. Method of Voting

- A. After debate, the presiding officer shall ensure that the motion is clear and call for the vote.
- B. All questions submitted to the Town Council shall be determined by a majority vote of the Town Council members voting on any such question, unless otherwise required by special or general law. A majority is more than half.
- C. An “affirmative vote” by a majority of the Town Council present being necessary to adopt a motion, a tie vote means that the motion, resolution or issue has been rejected. When a motion fails on a tie vote, the “noes” prevail.
- D. In order for a motion in a zoning matter to be adopted, it must be approved by a majority of those voting.
- E. Town Council Members can request that the Town Clerk call for the individual votes of Town Council Members on any matter before the Town Council (Roll Call).

Section 6-10. Participation and Attendance by Remote Electronic Communication

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA
RULES OF PROCEDURE
April 28, 2026

The Town Council has developed various methods to allow for participation and attendance at Town Council, Board, Commission and Committee meetings. The following policy is established pursuant to the Maryland Open Meetings Act to allow members of Town Council, staff members, applicants or petitioners to participate in a Town Council meeting through electronic communication means from a remote location that is not open to the public, subject to the conditions and requirements of this Section. Public attendance to listen and/or view the proceedings of the Town Council may be made available through live streaming on the Town's online meeting platform or phone in.

- The following provisions shall be applied strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting.

- A. On or before the day of a meeting, a Town Council member who wishes to participate through electronic means, when an in-person meeting has been scheduled, must notify the presiding officer that the member is unable to attend the meeting in-person.
- B. Following receipt of notification as required by subsection A., remote participation by electronic communication is authorized if the Town Clerk makes arrangements for the voice of the remote participant to be heard by all persons who wish to participate or attend utilizing electronic means or conference call.
- C. At the start of the meeting the presiding officer, shall advise the Town Council of the member's request for participation by remote electronic communication. The Town Clerk shall record in the minutes of the meeting the means from which the member participated (in person or online meeting platform).

Section 6-11. Ex Parte Communication

A. Prohibition.

1. *Ex parte* communication is prohibited. An *ex parte* communication includes an oral or written communication not on the public record to which reasonable prior notice to all parties is not given.
2. Such communication between Town Council members and interested persons is prohibited if relevant to the merits of a planning project or other Planning Commission proceeding that may eventually appear before the Town Council.
3. Town Council members should not discuss applications with applicants or other interested persons outside the confines of a public meeting, but should recommend that the person(s) contact Town staff with any questions or concerns.

B. Disclosure of *Ex Parte* Communications.

1. If a member does inadvertently engage in an *ex parte* communication, the Town Council member(s) should, at the next meeting in which the relevant application is to be discussed, state the nature of the communication.
2. The member shall submit for the record any written communication received, any written response to communication, state the substance of each oral communication received, and state the substance of any oral response to a communication.
3. Alternatively, the member may recuse himself or herself from discussion and voting on that specific application.
4. If a member does not disclose *ex parte* communications, they may be subject to the provisions of Chapter 20, Ethics of the Town Code, which addresses conflicts of interest and enforcement actions.

C. Permitted Communications.

1. Nothing in this section shall preclude the Town Council in any matter from obtaining any advice, counsel, or assistance from Town staff which are not party to or directly involved in a pending matter.

2. This includes, but is not limited to, the Chief Executive Officer, staff from the Department of Planning and Code Administration, and the Town Attorney.

SECTION 7 – BOARDS, COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS, AND AUTHORITIES

Section 7-1. Appointments to Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Authorities

- A. The appointments of Town Council Members to Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Authorities shall be approved by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Town Council at the organizational meeting.
- B. In the event of a vacancy, the Town Council may consider and approve a replacement at any regular meeting of the Town Council.
- C. If the Town Council wishes, it may review appointments on an annual basis.

Section 7-2. Standing Committees of the Town Council

The Town Council may have Standing Committees of Council, to include but not limited to, financial and budgetary matters, land use and economic development matters, and the appointments of citizens to the Town's various Boards, Committees, and Commissions.

Section 7-3. The Creation of Standing Committees and New Committees

- A. Any new Standing Committee of the Town Council shall be established by an ordinance.
- B. Any new temporary committee shall be established by ordinance or resolution and shall specify the term during which the committee will remain in existence. No temporary committee shall be established for a term of more than 365 days, the period to run from the date the committee holds its initial meeting. The term of the temporary committee may be extended by Town Council through an ordinance or resolution for additional periods of up to 365 days each. A temporary committee shall cease to exist upon
 1. the completion of its designated task or assignment;
 2. the date it submits its final oral or written report to Town Council;

3. the expiration of the term specified in the ordinance or resolution creating the committee or of any extension of its original term; or
 4. three years from the date of its initial meeting, whichever occurs first.
- C. No new committee shall be established until the Town Manager has issued a report with comments and recommendations regarding the creation of the committee. The Town Manager may delegate responsibility for preparing this report to any department head. The report required by this section shall include the comments and recommendations regarding:
1. The need for the committee and possible duplications or conflicts with other committees;
 2. The appropriateness of a committee format to deal with the issues involved; and
 3. The impact that creation of the committee will have on Town staff and resources, including: (a) the estimated total amount of Town staff time that will be required on an annual or other basis to staff the committee; (b) whether the committee can accomplish its assigned work with existing staff; and (c) if new staff will be required, the total amount of additional staffing that will be required and the projected annual cost of such additional staff.

SECTION 8 – GENERAL OPERATING POLICY

Section 8-1. Staff Attendance at Meetings Organized by Town Council Members

Members of Town Staff, in their official capacity, shall not be invited by the Mayor or Town Council Members to attend meetings which are political in nature. Additionally, any requests for a member of Town staff to attend a community meeting or event that has been organized by or is being hosted by a member of the Town Council shall be made directly to the Town Manager.

Section 8-2. Meetings with the Public, Staff, and the Mayor or Town Council Members

When possible, the balance of Town Council will be given reasonable advance notice of any meetings scheduled for and attended by the public, a member or members of Town

staff, and the Mayor or Town Council Members. A report by the Mayor or Town Council Member(s) in attendance should be given at the next Town Council meeting with a summary of the discussion and details of any follow-up action resulting from the meeting.

Section 8-3. Broadcasting Town Council Meetings

Recordings of regular meetings, special meetings, and public hearings of the Town Council shall be made available to the public and may be streamed via the Town's online meeting platform. The video of recorded meetings will be available as soon as practicable following the Town Council meeting.

Section 8-4. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting

The minutes of the Town Council meetings shall reflect the official actions of the Town Council. The minutes shall provide a summary of the discussion and record how Town Council voted on motions. The minutes will be considered for approval within a reasonable time following the meeting they record.

Statements to be Included in the Minutes. Any member of the Town Council who wishes to have a statement or comment included in the minutes shall make that known prior to making the statement and shall provide the Town Clerk with a written copy of his or her statement.

Section 8-5. Official Documents Issued by the Town Council

Official documents issued by the Mayor and Town Council include, but are not limited to, legislation (ordinances and resolutions), proclamations, official citations, and certificates of recognition. Official documents are generally prepared by the Department of Legislative Services at the direction of the Town Manager.² Signatures on legislation do not necessarily indicate agreement with the content of the legislation but rather that the signer witnessed the legislative procedures associated with the adoption of the legislation. When signers are not available to sign in person, permission will be obtained in advance for the use of their electronic signature.

- A. Legislation: Actions requiring legislation are defined in Town Code. Any member of the Legislative Branch may propose legislation.

² Staff to ensure legislative documents (resolutions, ordinances) indicate they are "introduced by" the specific supporting Council member. The Director of Legislative Services will ensure compliance, with review by the Assistant Town Manager and Town Manager.

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA
RULES OF PROCEDURE
April 28, 2026

1. Ordinance: An ordinance is an action taken by the Town Council that creates a law that governs conduct within the jurisdiction. It is a municipal law that may be amended or repealed by the adoption of another ordinance. Ordinances must be read at least twice in separate meetings and are adopted during a regular meeting of the Town Council by means of an affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the Town Council. Ordinances are signed by the Town Council.
 2. Emergency Ordinance: Extenuating circumstances may require the Town Council to adopt an ordinance after only one reading. In such circumstances, the Town Council adopts an emergency ordinance by means of an affirmative majority vote of a quorum of the Town Council. Emergency ordinances are signed by the Town Council.
 3. Resolution: A resolution is an official declaration of the wishes and opinions of a municipal body. A resolution may be issued to formally express the Town Council's policy or to make a public statement from the Town Council. A "motion" is used by the Town Council to indicate approval or denial of a procedural action. Resolutions are adopted during a regular meeting of the Town Council by means of an affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the Town Council. Resolutions are signed by the Town Council.
- B. Proclamation: A proclamation is an official declaration issued by the Town Council to make something known, a public and official announcement. Proclamations are generally issued at the last regular meeting of the Town Council of the month at a regular meeting of the Council but may be issued at a special meeting. Proclamations may be requested by the Mayor, Town Council, Town Staff, or members of the community. Proclamations are signed by the Town Council.
1. Official Proclamation: An official proclamation may be required by Town or State Code to announce actions taken by the Town Council when legislation is not required or has already been adopted, such as the declaration of a state of emergency or the cessation of annexation proceedings.
 2. Ceremonial Proclamation: A proclamation may also serve as a ceremonial document issued by the Council to commemorate a specific time period (day, week, or month) to increase public awareness of issues with the hope

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA
RULES OF PROCEDURE
April 28, 2026

of improving the well-being of our citizens, to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary achievements of La Plata residents and non-profit organizations, and to honor occasions of importance and significance to La Plata residents. Ceremonial proclamations are not legally binding and should not be interpreted as a policy endorsement.

- C. Official Citation: An official citation may be issued to individuals, groups, businesses, or organizations to recognize outstanding achievements such as a grand opening of a business, business anniversary, or similar achievement, in recognition of a specific event or occasion such as an anniversary, a milestone birthday, Boy Scout Eagle Award, Girl Scout Gold Award, retirement, a memorial service, a significant contribution to the community, award ceremonies, or a similar achievement. Official citations may be requested by the Mayor, Town Council, Town Staff, or members of the community. Official citations are signed by the Mayor or Mayor Pro Tem.

- D. Certificate of Recognition: A certificate of recognition is provided to a local individual. . Certificates of recognition are signed by individual Town Council Members.

Section 8-6. Amending the Rules of Procedure

The rules of procedure may be amended at any regular meeting, or at any properly called special meeting that includes amendment of the rules as one of the stated purposes of the meeting. Adoption of amendments to the rules of procedure shall require an affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the Town Council. Amendments to the rules of procedure become effective upon adoption.

Section 8-7. Special Rules of Procedure

The Town Council may adopt its own special rules of procedure to cover situations that are not adequately addressed in these Rules of Procedure. Adoption of a special rule of procedure shall require an affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the Town Council.

*Exhibit A to Resolution 26-23
Adopted: April 28, 2026*

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA
Resolution 26-25

Introduced By:	Mayor Jeannine E. James, by request
Date Introduced:	April 28, 2026
Date Adopted:	April 28, 2026
Date Effective:	April 28, 2026

A RESOLUTION concerning

Code of Civility

FOR the purpose of formally adopting a Code of Civility to govern the conduct of elected officials, appointed officials, staff, applicants, and members of the public participating in the affairs of the Town of La Plata; affirming standards of respectful engagement in the conduct of Town business; and all matters generally relating thereto.

* * * * *

1
2 **WHEREAS**, the Town of La Plata is committed to conducting the public’s business in
3 a manner that promotes trust, transparency, accountability, and effective governance; and
4

5 **WHEREAS**, civility is synonymous with courtesy, politeness, graciousness,
6 tolerance, consideration, and respect, and is attained through disciplined action and
7 expression, particularly in circumstances involving disagreement or competing viewpoints;
8 and
9

10 **WHEREAS**, civility requires elected and appointed officials, as well as staff,
11 applicants, and members of the public, to comport themselves in a manner that permits
12 honest efforts at understanding the views, reasoning, and perspectives of others, even when
13 consensus is not achieved; and
14

15 **WHEREAS**, the Mayor and Council recognize that vigorous debate is fundamental to
16 representative government, but that debate must be conducted in a manner that preserves
17 decorum, promotes rational discourse, and safeguards the dignity of all participants; and
18

19 **WHEREAS**, a failure to maintain standards of civility undermines public confidence,
20 distracts from substantive policy issues, damages working relationships necessary for
21 effective municipal operations, and ultimately impairs the Town’s ability to serve its

Resolution 26-25

residents; and

WHEREAS, a clearly articulated Code of Civility establishes behavioral expectations, reinforces professional standards, and provides guidance to those engaged in the legislative and administrative functions of the Town; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA that the Code of Civility attached hereto is hereby adopted and incorporated by reference as an official policy of the Town of La Plata shall take effect immediately upon adoption; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the standards set forth in the Code of Civility shall apply to elected officials, appointed officials, Town staff, applicants, and members of the public participating in meetings or official proceedings of the Town, consistent with applicable law and constitutional protections; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that nothing in the Code of Civility shall be construed to limit lawful speech, legislative prerogative, or statutory authority, but rather to promote conduct that advances respectful engagement and effective governance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that by signing this Resolution, the Mayor and each member of the Council publicly affirm their support for the Code of Civility and declare their personal commitment to conduct themselves in accordance with its principles; and

Resolution 26-25

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the Council of the Town of La Plata on this 28th day of April, 2026.

SEAL:



COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA


Jeannine E. James, Mayor


Paul C. Guttenberg, Councilman


Patrick McCormick, Councilman

ATTEST:


Shelby Pritchett
Town Clerk


Gregory Sampson, Jr., Councilman


Tyjon C. Johnson, Councilman

Date April 28, 2026



Town of La Plata CODE OF CIVILITY

Purpose: The purpose of this Code of Civility is to promote respect, professionalism, and orderly conduct in all Town business.

The Town of La Plata encourages open expression, active listening, informed participation, and good-faith dialogue among officials, staff, and members of the public. Nothing herein is intended to limit lawful freedom of expression. Vigorous debate strengthens public decision-making when it is grounded in facts and conducted without intimidation, harassment, obscenity, or personal hostility.

All interactions connected to Town business should reflect the standards expected of those entrusted with public responsibility.

I. Professional Respect

- A. Speak and act politely, respectfully, and reasonably.
 - a. Refrain from personal attacks, name-calling, and profanity.
 - b. Do not use physical gestures that are intended to demean or harass another.
 - c. Maintain a composed tone.
 - d. Speak in turn, allow others to finish, and engage without raising your voice or speaking over others.
 - e. Use language that reflects professionalism and restraint.
- B. Be a positive role model in all discussions. Listen actively and address others in the discussion with respect.
- C. Be considerate of others' time. Use your allotted time effectively and respect time limitations. Maintain a single, orderly discussion without crosstalk or side conversations.
- D. When disagreeing with others, focus on the merits of the issue and not the individual. Recognize that people may have different opinions.

- E. If your perspective does not prevail, be willing to discuss the outcome constructively. Describe others' positions the way you would like others to describe yours.
- F. Understand and respect that the staff's role is to provide objective information and expert opinion, even if your personal views differ. Address staff with professionalism. Raise concerns about performance or conduct through established administrative processes rather than during public confrontation.

II. Responsibility

- A. Enhance democratic processes individually and collectively. Be informed and prepared for public meetings. Encourage others to be informed and involved.
- B. Communicate clearly and transparently. Present agenda items and proposals in good faith, with legitimate municipal purpose and stated reasoning.
- C. Distinguish your opinions from facts. Ensure your statements of fact are accurate and verifiable.
- D. Approach new information with inquiry and good faith, seek common ground where possible, and use public meetings and communications to advance substantive policy discussion.
- E. Be accountable for your words and actions. Recognize and apologize if you fall short of this code's standards.