

recommendations are recommended only," Winkler said, who amounts being discussed did

public Information Officer over a lab technician — that's his decision," Winkler told the commissioners.

"I agree. We ought to give him the

would be. County Commissioner Nancy Sefton disagreed, saying that the wear and tear on the cars plus maintenance

The sheriff's office did not want to comment yesterday until Gartland returned from a drug symposium he was attending.

# Schaefer signs bill on assault weapons

## In 10-day period, background check required

By Stuart Hirsch  
Staff Reporter

POLIS — Marylanders seeking semi-automatic assault weapons will have to wait seven days and pass a background check under legislation signed by Gov. William Donald Schaefer last week.

Starting July 1, the Maryland State Police will check the background of a prospective gun buyer for evidence that he or she was a drug addict, alcoholic, or a felon or was mentally defective.

The new law applies to 24 gun models, including Uzis and AK-47's. Violators will be subject to prison terms of up to 10 years and maximum fines of \$10,000.

Brady, chairwoman of Handgun Control Inc., attended the bill signing Friday. She is the wife of former House Press Secretary James Brady, who was shot and seriously injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan in 1981.

Schaefer called passage of the law "a significant step toward keeping weapons out of the wrong hands."

The initial version of the bill introduced in both the House of Delegates and the Senate was rejected and later modified. It was the modified bill that Schaefer signed.

Lawmakers across the nation began to pass laws on semi-automatic weapons in the wake of the assassination of Patrick Edward Purdy, a five-year-old child in a Stockton, Calif., schoolyard. He fired 100 bullets in less than two minutes.

The General Assembly passed a similar measure last year, but Schaefer said he could not introduce additional control legislation this year.

When the assault rifle bill stalled in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Schaefer lobbied its chair, Sen. Walter M. Baker (D-Upper Meriden), to get the bill moving again.

"The situation warrants ... would it not be better to get it done again?" Schaefer asked. "I'm

sure we would. Am I going to introduce additional legislation in the coming year? I don't think so."

Charles H. Cunningham, Maryland state liaison for the National Rifle Association, said the only people that will be affected by the new waiting period (applicants to buy handguns are already subject to a background check and waiting period) are law-abiding citizens.

"Criminals steal guns, they don't buy them legally," he said.

Nearly two dozen states are considering either a ban or more regulations on semi-automatic weapons, which fire as fast as the trigger is pulled.

"The bills that we're trying to fight at the state, local and national level are against semi-automatic guns," Cunningham said.

The California Senate late Thursday night passed a bill banning the ownership of the weapons, and California Gov. George Deukmejian has indicated that he will sign the bill.

And earlier, as part of his anti-crime proposal, President George Bush said he would seek a permanent ban on imports of foreign-made assault rifles. In addition, Bush wants to prohibit gun magazines of more than 15 rounds.

"For advocates of reasonable gun control and public safety, this has been the best week we have ever seen," Brady said.

Last fall, gun control opponents in Maryland waged a \$6 million losing battle against a bill eliminating cheap handguns known as Saturday Night Specials. The 1988 gun control bill established a nine-member board to decide which guns may be manufactured and sold in the state.

But Brady said she does not think any similar move will be taken this year.

"I think certainly what happened last year and the great landslide victory in November just paved the way for what we're seeing happening across the country today," Brady said. "I think we have victory after victory and I think the NRA would be very ill-advised to think of a referendum now."

# Economic consultants hired to study La Plata business district

By Lee Stephens  
Staff Reporter

With growth expected, La Plata town officials are planning to make the central business district a viable and profitable place.

A group of economic consultants was hired to study the central business district — encompassing Charles and Central streets and La Grange Avenue — and prepare a "mainstreet revitalization plan," according to Town Manager Doug Miller.

PR Economic Consultants of Bethesda used the "4-point approach" to downtown revitalization, which centers on organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring. The report, which was preliminary, was presented to the mayor and council at the June 16 meeting. Miller said RPR is scheduled to report back to the council on more specifics in a month.

In the preliminary report, RPR highlighted negative issues affecting the business district:

• limited available land for new retail development;

• fragmented district configuration with regard to land uses and ownership;

• abundance of public use and institutional space within the district;

• limited historic architectural significance within the district.

Positive issues highlighted were:

- potential for a regionally based antique market;
- a growing local employment base;
- growing public and institutional base;
- commitment to revitalize by town government and local business community.

Preliminary recommendations included appointing "La Plata Ambassadors" to encourage new investment and development opportunity, creating a commission to oversee and encourage development, supporting existing programs, improving parking areas for easy access, and implementing and enforcing structural and architectural design guidelines for all new development and renovations to existing buildings.

In other town news, the council recently awarded a bid for a wastewater study to George, Miles and Buhr, of Salisbury and Baltimore. The group will evaluate the sewer treatment plant and collection system and look at its growth for the next 20 years.

The council also deferred vote on the proposed Historic District Ordinance. A public hearing will be held June 22 on the amended ordinance, which may include comments from a previous public hearing.

The council also voted to defer the scheduled vote on the proposed Morris/Kneib annexation until the June 13 meeting because of "legal technicalities," Miller said.

And, Councilmembers Jerry Dedman and Liz Raymond were sworn in after

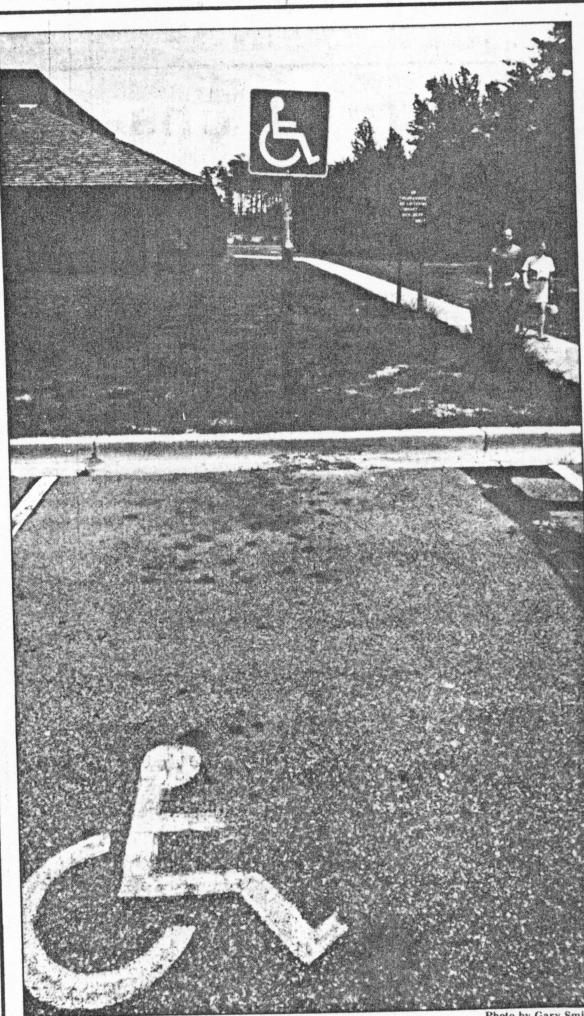


Photo by Gary Smith

Soon four new handicapped spaces in a new parking lot will join the lone space currently designated for the handicapped at P.D. Brown Library next to Smallwood Shopping Center. At background, right, are library patrons Ronnie Talton and Kristine Tinsman.

# Library access will improve

By Kevin Bushweller  
Staff Reporter

Reading is Katherine Hicks' favorite pastime. She reads several books simultaneously, starts books before she finishes others, and makes trips to Waldorf's P.D. Brown library whenever she can.

But trips to the library — what many people take for granted — are a chore for Hicks.

Twenty years ago, Hicks' cancer-infected left leg was amputated, and she was relegated to life on crutches.

Going to the library became a frustrating challenge. The handicapped parking spaces were not close to the building, the doors were hard to open, and in wet weather, she was worried about falling.

Hicks went to the library anyway, took out books, held them close to her crutch, and struggled to her car. But making solo trips to the library became too much of a chore, and she hesitated to go unless accompanied by her daughter.

"When the things that you take for granted like the library are stopped," Hicks said, "it's frustrating."

Hicks wrote a letter to the Charles County Commissioners asking that the handicapped parking at the library be improved. She didn't expect a quick response. But she got one. And it was heartening.

Commissioners' President Thomas "Mac" Middleton, and Commissioners Murray Levy and Nancy Sefton said in a May 4 letter that construction for a new parking lot at P.D. Brown

Library will begin in June. The new parking lot "will provide closer access to the front entrance as well as additional handicapped parking spaces," the letter stated.

The new parking lot will be behind the library, but closer to the entrance. It will have four additional handicapped parking spaces with upright signs reserving spots for the right people. There will also be two handicapped ramps leading to the entrance.

Hicks said without the upright signs, it is very difficult to reprimand motorists who unfairly park in handicapped spaces.

"It's frustrating to see someone park in a handicapped spot when I can't do anything about it," Hicks said.

Construction for the new parking lot was proposed by the library two years ago, according to Kitty Hurrey, director of the tri-county library system. The commissioners approved the proposal, and put money for construction in this year's budget.

Hurrey said the plan for the Waldorf library did not include adequate parking for all patrons, and had only one handicapped parking space.

"We've had nothing but complaints since the day we opened our doors," Hurrey said.

Hicks said there are many places in the county where handicapped parking is located far from stores or buildings. She hopes when the St. Charles Towne Center is built, planners will put handicapped spaces right next to the stores.

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