

Westminster looks at sister city program with Estonia By Megen Wessel, Times Staff Writer Monday, November 27, 2000

Westminster's mayor and City Council heard a presentation from Col. Grant Hayden, director of plans operation and training with the Army National Guard, and a representative from Carroll Community College about Partners for Peace, a once-military program that started out in 1991, aimed at helping the newly independent country become stable, train management and improve communication between civilians and military.

The program developed into a partner-city program in 1993, which includes seven Maryland municipalities as well as 14 other states.

"We plant the seed; it's up to you if it grows and blossoms," Hayden told council members during the presentation at Monday's council meeting.

If Westminster decides to become a part of the program, it would most likely be paired with the township of Rapla, according to Hayden.

Rapla is located near the middle of Estonia and south of its capital, Talinn, which has already been paired with Annapolis, according to Hayden.

Rapla is home to approximately 7,000 to 8,000 people, who make about U.S. \$232 a month, according to Hayden.

In the exchange, Rapla would be learning from Westminster officials about economic development and how municipal government operates and collects revenue, according to Hayden.

The Army National Guard is hoping to pair four other Maryland cities with cities in Estonia in the coming year, according to Hayden.

Westminster Mayor Kenneth A. Yowan is scheduled to visit Estonia sometime next summer, according to Hayden.

In other business:

The mayor and council unanimously approved three separate ordinances that provide for a 10 percent increase in the city's water, sewer and special capital benefit assessments. A public hearing on the ordinance was held during the meeting, but no individuals voiced their opinions on the increase. The ordinances will go into effect this January.

The council also voted to accept the deed for a half-acre parcel of the Stoner Property. The parcel will be used to house the city's new water tank, which should be on line by August 2001, according to Thomas B. Beyard, director of planning and public works for Westminster.

Yowan announced that the Arts Council's Festival of Wreaths is scheduled to start today at 5:30 p.m. and that Westminster's Christmas Tree lighting and Starlight Shopping Spree will take place downtown Dec. 2 at 5 p.m.

Roger Joneckis, chief of police for Westminster, announced that the police department is receiving extra funds from the CRASH coalition and the Carroll County Health Department to step up DWI patrols on the weekends leading up to Christmas. The department will also be increasing foot and bicycle patrols in shopping centers and downtown to deter vehicle theft.

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