

The Town of Laurel  
Mayor & Council Meeting Minutes  
January 20, 2026

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, beginning at 6:15 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor Carlos Oliveras, President of Council Chris Calio, RogJenea Fisher, George Lodato, Jonathan Kellam via ZOOM, and Donald Holden. Also, in attendance were Chief Robert Kracyla, Judge Ruffin, Finance Manager Melissa Naselli, Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant, and Town Manager Jamie Smith. It was noted that Councilman Jim LaRue and Public Works Director James Foskey were absent. It was noted that Director of Code Enforcement Position is vacant.

Councilman Lodato made a motion to hold a closed session to discuss personnel matters. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman LaRue absent.

Regular Session Recessed at 6:16 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened at 7:00 p.m.

Chief Kracyla presented the following Police Promotions to Sgt. Ashley Gardner, Sgt. Matthew Porter, and Lt. Jason Bauer.

Mayor Oliveras stated Mr. Drew Slater is in attendance tonight to present on the Delaware Energy Relief Fund. Mr. Slater stated he is the Executive Director of Energize Delaware. He provided a variety of energy efficient saving measures and stated there is no cost sign-up for Energize Delaware. He stated if a person qualifies a \$300 credit from the Delaware Energize Fund will be applied to your account. He stated there are two funds (1.) Delaware Energy Fund for Municipals for residents who reside in a municipality and (2.) Delmara Power Fund for residents who do not reside in a municipality. He advised this project was implemented in August and they have over 50 contractors. He provided financial qualifications for a one-person household and a four-person household. Mayor Oliveras inquired about the timeline of setting up an appointment. Mr. Slater stated they have the availability potentially this week. Mr. Charles Kistler, from the Delaware Help Initiative, stated they're contractor partners and provided an update on the projects they have completed in town.

The Mayor & Council Meeting Minutes of December 15, 2025, were presented for review. Councilman Lodato stated on page 2. the date for the Police Accountability Meeting should be February 10, 2026. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of December 15, 2025, with the proposed amendment. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman LaRue absent.

The December 2025 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Town Manager Smith stated Public Works Director Foskey is not in attendance, but his report was submitted to Mayor & Council for review.

- Judge Ruffin stated she had no additions to her report.

Councilman Lodato followed up with last month's inquiry of how much money is owed to the town.

Judge Ruffin stated it is listed on the Accounts Receivable Report for December 2025, and it is in the amount of \$143,565.25.

- Finance Manager Naselli stated the town's revenue is not where we want to be at this point but over the next 6 months the town will be saving over \$900.00 due to a vendor change.
- Chief Kracyla stated he met with Mayor Oliveras and Councilman Lodato pertaining a communications meeting and attended a meeting held by the Sussex Co. Board of Realtors. He stated Recruit Manning started the Dover Police Academy on Sunday, January 11, 2026. He stated himself and several officers from the department attended the funeral service for Cpl. Ty Snook. He provided an update to the camera installation and know they're looking to install 11 cameras instead of 8 cameras.
- Town Manager Smith stated the walkway construction at Janosik Park has started today.

President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the December Department Head Reports as presented. Councilwoman Fisher seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman LaRue absent.

Town Manager Smith provided an Update on Open Items. Town Manager Smith stated she spoke with the town's attorney pertaining the consideration of a variance request and per the town's attorney Title 22 of State Law requires the establishment of a Board of Adjustment, which the town has done in the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Title 22 also offers an appeal process for any variances. She advised Title 22 does not address variance requests to be finalized by Mayor and Council. The towns attorney is not aware of any other towns that have this practice. If Mayor & Council elect to have final say the Zoning Ordinance would need to be amended so the town would be in compliance. Councilman Lodato stated there are other municipalities that allow Mayor & Council to have final decisions for land use regulations and zoning changes. Councilman Lodato expressed his concern if the proposed use is going to change demographically the Mayor & Council should have an input if they don't have a final say. Mr. Mike Smith, the towns attorney, responded there are two different variances an area variance and a conditional use variance. An area variance is geared toward physical dimensions such as setbacks which typically goes in front of the Board of Adjustments. A conditional use variance allows for a different use that is not a permitted use for the property and typically goes before Mayor & Council. Councilman Lodato stated the Globe Building received a variance to allow for all commercial instead of it's permitted use for

commercial and residential. Mr. Smith stated if it was a change of use and not listed under a permitted use the variance would come in front of Mayor & Council. Town Manager Smith stated if Mayor & Council wishes to amend the zoning ordinance to allow Mayor & Council to have final say on variance requests it would need to come before Planning & Zoning for their approval.

Mayor Oliveras presented Ordinance 2026-1, pertaining a Grease Trap Ordinance. Town Manager Smith stated Ordinance 2026-1 is an amendment to Chapter 125 Sewers, to address fats, oils, and grease (FOG) interceptors and traps. She advised quarterly inspections would be completed for commercial properties. The towns wastewater operators attended a class prior to adoption of this ordinance and the fee is already established in the budget. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept Ordinance 2026-1. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman LaRue absent.

Mayor Oliveras presented a Communication Committee Request. Councilman Lodato proposed to establish a Communication Committee to enhance the communication between the residents. The committee would be made up of 4-6 residents and one council person with Mrs. Sharon Ardisana agreeing to be on the committee. The committee would be responsible in enhancing the towns website and other platforms to make them more user friendly. The committee would meet once a week and provide a written report to Mayor & Council. Councilman Lodato is requesting for Mayor & Council's approval to establish a Communication Committee. Mayor Oliveras recommended if a Mayor & Council Workshop could be held to allow the Mayor & Council to express their opinion on this matter.

Mayor Oliveras presented DNREC, Public Drinking Water and Wastewater Database Development to Facilitate Mitigation Actions. Town Manager Smith and Public Works Director Foskey met with a representative pertaining to the inventory of the towns drinking water. She advised DNREC is proposing to implement a program to establish inventory and a digital map of the towns drinking water and wastewater systems throughout the state. She advised the towns engineer currently has records of the towns' water and wastewater systems. She stated her two concerns are first that Sussex County has not accepted and second it's not their intent to require any mandates. She recommended not to move forward until uncertainties of mandates are made clear prior to accepting. President of Council Calio made a motion to deny the request to accept DNREC's Public Drinking Water and Wastewater Database Development to Facilitate Mitigation Actions. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman LaRue absent.

Councilwoman Fisher stated she attended a Martin Luther King, Jr. Fundraiser and stated Laurel Strong.

Councilman Lodato thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting and thanked the town staff for their hard work.

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Councilman Lodato stated One-Laurel will be holding an evening meeting on January 28, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at Laurel Town Hall.

Mayor Oliveras read a statement provided by the attorney on behalf of the Mayor & Council for the actions taken part in early 2025 by the Laurel Police Department pertaining immigration.

A resident, inquired if Mayor Oliveras was disgusted with the police departments actions pertaining an article. Mayor Oliveras stated no, and referred to the statement as presented.

A resident, stated she supported the Laurel Police Department and the Chief for their encouraging work and their compliance with all state and federal agencies.

With there being no further business, Councilman Lodato made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilwoman Fisher seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman LaRue absent.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

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Mayor

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President of Council

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Town Manager

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Recording Secretary