

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting
November 20, 2023

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Monday, November 20, 2023, beginning at 7:11 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor John Shwed, President of Council Chris Calio, Council Members Carlos Oliveras, Robin Fisher-Cornish via ZOOM, Jonathan Kellam, and Donald Holden. Also, in attendance were Director of Code Enforcement Ken West, Public Works Director James Foskey, Chief Dan Wright, Judge Ruffin, Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant, and Town Manager Jamie Smith. It was noted that Councilwoman Cheryl Martin was absent.

The Mayor & Council Regular Session Minutes of October 16, 2023, were presented for review and adoption. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the minutes of October 16, 2023. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

The October 2023 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Director of Code Enforcement West stated he had no additions to his report. Mayor Shwed inquired if the No. 1 Chinese is close to opening due to signage on the building. Director of Code Enforcement West stated both No. 1 Chinese and Britts are looking to be open in two months.
- Public Works Director Foskey stated he no additions to his report. Mayor Shwed stated the septic receiving had another good month.
- Judge Ruffin stated they will be starting a new initiative in December to allow the Accounts Receivable to decrease off the books. Starting in December people who have failed to appear are encouraged to come to the court in a good faith effort to make a new payment plan agreement.
- Mayor Shwed advised Finance Manager Mary Introcaso passed away unexpectedly last month. He thanked all the neighboring towns who have come and assisted our staff during this challenging time.
- Chief Wright stated he had no additions to his report. Chief Wright stated he has communicated with City of Seaford and the Delaware State Police to allow for more directive patrols in the towns needed areas, which is set to begin.
- Town Manager Smith stated the Dunbar renovations are moving along and if any members of Mayor & Council wish to do a walk through, please contact her to schedule a day and time. She advised Tidewater Parks Phase II is expected to be hopefully installed by the end of December. She thanked all the town staff for everything they have done, since the passing of Finance Manager Introcaso.

Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the October Department Head Reports as presented. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Mayor Shwed presented the 2nd Reading of Ordinance 2023-2, Chapter 61, Traffic. Town Manager Smith stated the ordinance will allow the town to adopt the most recent version of Title 21 of the Delaware State Code as it relates to Traffic Enforcement and any future updates to Title 21 of the Delaware State Code, to include fees, penalties, and fines. The adoption excludes any felony violations and Section 41777, Driving a Vehicle While Under the Influence or with a Prohibited Alcohol or Drug Content. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the 2nd and Final Reading of Ordinance 2023-2. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Town Manager Smith presented the development updates.

- ***Whaley Property & Discount Land Property:*** both proposed projects are continuing to work with state agency to receive their permits.
- ***Rigbie:*** the owners engineer presented minor amendments to their Preliminary Site Plan at November's P&Z meeting with P&Z's approval.
- ***County Seat Highway Rt. 13 & Rt. 19:*** the owner attended November's P&Z Meeting where they presented a concept plan where they proposed a convenience store, gas pumps, a fast food restaurant, and a possible car wash at the Bargain Bill's site.

Mayor Shwed presented the Bid Recommendation for Septic Receiving. Town Manager Smith stated the town received ARPA Funds which will allow for the upgrades for Septic Receiving at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. She advised the town received one bid from Chesapeake Turf, LLC in the amount of \$948,610.00. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the bid recommendation from Chesapeake Turf in the amount of \$948,610.00. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Mayor Shwed presented the Citizen Participation Certificate of Assurance. Councilman Oliveras made a motion to accept the Citizen Participation Certificate of Assurance. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Mayor Shwed presented Resolution 2023-4, where the Town of Laurel recognizes the importance of fair housing for the citizens of Laurel and where the Town of Laurel Supports the goals of the Federal Fair Housing Law. Councilman Oliveras made a motion to accept Resolution 2023-4. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Mayor Shwed presented Resolution 2023-5 endorsing the project to be submitted to the Delaware State Housing Authority for funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development authorizing Todd F. Lawson, Sussex County Administrator, to submit application.

Councilman Holden made a motion to accept Resolution 2023-5. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Mayor Shwed presented the 1st Reading of Ordinance 2023-3, Chapter 69, Curfew. Town Manager Smith stated residents recommended the town to look into amending the towns curfew ordinance due to the violence occurring. Town Manager Smith stated Chapter 69, Section 1B, Definitions will be amended to Juvenile- any unemancipated person 17 years or less of age. She stated Chapter 69, Section 2, Curfew for Juveniles will eliminate Subsection A & B and replace with the following: A. At eleven p.m. on all evenings (Monday- Sunday). Town Manager Smith stated the first violation will be a written response warning given to the juvenile's parents and the second violation will be a \$50.00 where they must attend Alderman Court. Mayor Shwed inquired if Chief Wright supported this amendment. Chief Wright stated yes. Town Manager Smith stated this ordinance doesn't acquire anyone to remain inside their home and this ordinance is only enforceable in public places excluding private property and common places. Town Manager Smith advised this ordinance will be effective as of January 1, 2024. Councilman Kellam made a motion to accept the 1st Reading of Ordinance 2023-3. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Town Manager Smith stated the Christmas Tree Lighting will be moved to next Tuesday, November 28, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. due to rain forecasted for tomorrow. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the postponement to the Christmas Tree Lighting to Tuesday, November 28, 2023, at Market Street Square Park beginning at 6:00 p.m. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish thanked the town staff and the police department for their continuing hard work.

Councilman Oliveras wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Councilman Kellam thanked all the town staff for their hard work and their support to Finance Introcaso's family.

Mayor Shwed stated our community has been through terrible tragedies in the past few months allowing people to come together.

Mayor Shwed stated a Thanksgiving Communal Service will be held on Wednesday, November 22, 2023 at Centenary Church beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Steve Cameron, resident of 238 West 8th Street, inquired if the proposed 180 apartment unit is know proposing 200 apartment units. Town Manager Smith stated they're still proposing 180 apartments at market rate.

Mr. Steve Cameron, resident of 238 West 8th Street, advised the towns crime rate is significantly higher than the national average and inquired what the town is doing to deter crime. Chief Wright advised the town is continuing to work with different agencies including the state police to focus on high crime areas and allowing officers to work overtime to help assist.

A resident of Lake Drive inquired if the concept plan on Rt. 13 and Rt. 9 will be replacing Bargain Bills. Town Manager Smith stated yes.

A resident of Lake Drive inquired if the curfew ordinance is enforceable at private properties including the apartment complexes. Town Manager Smith advised the ordinance is enforceable only at public places excluding private properties and common areas.

Councilman Kellam made a motion to hold a closed session to discuss personnel and contractual matters. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

Regular Session Recessed at 8:16 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened at 8:56 p.m.

President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the Towing Memorandum of Understanding drafted by the town solicitor that Carey's Towing will continue to do the towns towing service due to the town utilizing their services for numerous years as discussed in closed session. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Martin absent.

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

Regular Session Adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary