

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2025

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Monday, December 15, 2025, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor Carlos Oliveras, President of Council Chris Calio, Jim LaRue, RogJenea Fisher, George Lodato, Jonathan Kellam, and Donald Holden. Also, in attendance were Public Works Director James Foskey via ZOOM, Chief Robert Kracyla, Judge Ruffin via ZOOM, Finance Manager Melissa Naselli, Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant, and Town Manager Jamie Smith. It was noted that Director of Code Enforcement Position is vacant.

Mayor Oliveras stated Mr. Brandon Tull, from Lank, Johnson, & Tull is in attendance tonight to present the FY 2023 Audit. Mr. Tull stated he is the Audit Director of Lank, Johnson, & Tull and he will be presenting the FY 2023 Audit from fiscal year July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. It was noted that copies were presented to Mayor & Council for their review. Mr. Tull highlighted various financial statements showcasing the towns financial position. He stated the largest revenue sources were the Water Department, the Wastewater Department, grants, taxes, and penalties. He stated the largest expenditures were the Water Department, the Police Department, and the Wastewater Department. He advised a Comment Letter was submitted in the Mayor & Council packets to help provide suggestions where the town could do better. He advised that he is working on the towns FY2024 Audit with a completion date expected by the end of the calendar year 2026. He stated an audit is performed to make sure the town is operating financially reasonable with citizens tax dollars. Mr. Tull inquired if Mayor & Council had any questions, pertaining to the FY 2023 Audit.

Councilman Lodato inquired about the intentions of the Comment Letter. Mr. Tull stated this letter provides recommendations to help improve the towns internal management.

Mayor Oliveras stated Mr. Toro Luby is in attendance tonight to present on Affordable Housing. Mr. Luby stated he attended last month's Mayor & Council Meeting where he felt very welcomed and it was much appreciated. He presented the Penalyn Village book where he read a couple of paragraphs to the public. He also presented a signed copy of the book to the Laurel Public Library. He stated he is in attendance tonight to present the importance and the need of Workforce Housing in Sussex County. He stated his company Workforce Enterprise has created a Workforce Housing Guide pertaining Sussex County, which is available on their Facebook page at no cost. He stated Delaware State Housing Authority were funded 5 million dollars to create a Workforce Housing Program last summer. Councilman Holden inquired if this program was intended for new homeowners or struggling homeowners. Mr. Luby stated the intention of this program is help create more housing for the workforce with the guide being used an informational tool. Councilman Lodato inquired if an ordinance needs to be created pertaining a lot rent. Town Manager Smith stated no, she doesn't believe an ordinance needs to be created. Chief Kracyla stated the program is very similar to the Housing Alliance Delaware and cautioned the Mayor & Council to make an educate decision on higher density developments. Mr. Luby stated he is requesting a one-on-one cases, which larger developers do not necessarily do. He also advised his main goal is to improve workforce housing

and not to produce more subsidized housing or section 8 housing. Mr. Luby stated the guide is available at his Facebook Page Workforce Housing Private Enterprise, Inc. Mayor & Council thanked Mr. Luby for his time and his presentation.

The Mayor & Council Regular and Closed Session Minutes of November 17, 2025, were presented for review. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the regular and closed session minutes of November 17, 2025. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

The November 2025 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Public Works Director Foskey stated Christmas Decorations were completed throughout the town and town parks. He advised a water leak occurred on Oak Lane last week. He stated Town Manager Smith will highlight on the Transite Phase 4 Bid Openings later on.
- Judge Ruffin stated she had no additions or changes to her report.

Councilman Lodato stated at October's Mayor & Council the court was focusing on collecting receivables and inquired how much is owed to the town.

Judge Ruffin stated she did not have the total amount owed in front of her.

Judge Ruffin stated a capias is issued for their arrest when a fine is not collected. She stated after the first and second capias issued the court tries to collect at least 1/3 of the money and after the third capias issued the court tries to collect all the money. She advised under the report it will show a 3–10-year range span for what is owed to the town. She explained with the more tickets issued by the police department the accounts receivables will increase.

Town Manager Smith stated a few years ago our legislators did away with a capias fee that reduces the incentive for a person to rectify.

- Finance Manager Naselli advised she has updated the town's long-distance billing that will allow the town to save to \$100.00 month. She stated septic hauler invoices were mailed out and the town is close to where it needs to be.
- Chief Kracyla stated he attended the FLOCK Meeting on November 24, 2025, assisted with the Christmas Parade on December 5, 2025, and attended the funeral services for retired Seaford Police Chief Flood. He stated the next Police Accountability Meeting will be held on February 10, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. The following officers were promoted to Sergeant Matthew Porter and Ashley Gardner.

- Town Manager Smith stated a Preliminary Site Plan was submitted pertaining a McDonald's located on the southern portion of Rt. 13 & Rt. 9. The proposed site plan includes 5 commercial pads with one pad site being McDonald's. A public hearing will be held in February 2026. She stated a Board of Adjustment Meeting was held for a variance request pertaining an RV Park located on Old Sailor's Path. She advised they will be utilizing the portion of land that the solar farm will not be utilizing. She advised an Infrastructure Plan still needs to be submitted highlighting the water and sewer. The walkway at Janosik Park will begin in January 2026. She provided an update pertaining to the mill dam brush and with a clean-up time frame the beginning of the year. She thanked all town staff for their hard work on the Christmas Parade.

Councilman Lodato inquired about the status of the Director of Code Enforcement Position. Town Manager Smith stated she re-advertised the advertisement for two weeks and she has received three resumes that she will be reviewing.

Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the November Department Head Reports as presented. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Mayor Oliveras presented the Surveillance Camera Update. Chief Kracyla stated the town was awarded a \$120,000 grant for public safety. They proposed to install 20 pantel cameras that could read up to 600 feet of elevation in key areas. They were proposed to be mounted on the utility poles above 30 feet. He advised the electric company made a decision of not allowing the cameras. He looked into the possibility of installing their own poles but the labor was very costly. He stated an alternative is to switch to a solar panel camera with only 8 cameras being proposed due to the increased cost of the cameras. He advised he worked with state and local legislators regarding the project. The project deadline is December 31, 2025. Town Manager Smith thanked the City Manager of Seaford and their electric department for offering their services at a lower quote.

Mayor Oliveras presented the Laurel Public Library Request pertaining a Story Walk. Town Manager Smith stated the Mayor & Council granted permission for the library to install a story walk at Tidewater park. After the meeting, she received concerns about the story walk installation at Tidewater Park. Mrs. Stacey Lane, a library representative stated she is proposing to install the tail trail at Market Street Square Park as it's closer to the library and easier to maintain. Town Manager Smith recommended that Mayor & Council's approval to be contingent as a walk through needs to be completed due to utilities located within Market Street Square Park. Councilwoman Fisher made a motion to accept the Tail Trail to be located at Market Street Square Park with a walk through to be conducted to determine utilities prior to the installation of the tail trail. Councilman LaRue seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Mayor Oliveras presented the Transite Phase 4 Bid Opening. Town Manager Smith stated bids were opened on December 2, 2025, at Laurel Town Hall. She advised funding for this project is

available through a Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRF) at a principal forgiveness loan totaling \$1,280,800,00, which covers total project costs. The lowest bidder was R.E. Pierson Construction in the amount of \$808,629.00. Town Manager Smith stated this project will replace the sewer line from West 8th Street between West Street. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the Transite Phase 4 Bid Opening for R.E. Pierson in the amount of \$808,629.00. Councilman LaRue seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Mayor Oliveras presented the Acceptance of FY 2023 Audit Presentation. Town Manager Smith stated Mr. Tull presented the FY 2023 Audit to Mayor & Council for their approval. Councilman LaRue made a motion to accept the FY 2023 Audit as presented. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-1, with Councilman Lodato denying.

Mayor Oliveras presented the January 2026 & February 2026 Mayor & Council Meeting Schedule. Town Manager Smith presented January 2026 dates leaving Monday, January 5, 2026, held open if needed and meet on Tuesday, January 20, 2026. She presented February 2026 with leaving Monday February 2, 2026, held open if needed and meet on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the January 2026 & February 2026 Mayor & Council Meeting Dates as presented. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Councilman LaRue thanked everyone for attending tonight and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Councilwoman Fisher wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Councilwoman Fisher provided an update on the Laurel Youth Council stating that surveys were submitted to the Laurel School District and will be holding an interest group meeting in January 2026.

Councilman Lodato thanked the town staff for their hard work and everyone who attended tonight.

Councilman Lodato expressed his concern stated he feels items that should be listed under Old Business are getting lost as in September he proposed an amendment to the Board of Adjustments.

Councilman Kellam thanked the town staff for their hard work and everyone who attended tonight.

Mayor Oliveras provided a few updates listed below:

- Attended the Wreaths Across America on Saturday, December 13, 2025.
- Laurel Public Library held their Annual Coat & Toy Drive.
- December 18, 2025, the Laurel Senior Center will be hosting their Christmas Party.
- Provided an update on the Delaware Energy Relief Refund. More information will be coming forward.
- Attended the second town hall meeting for Hollybrook.

- Congratulated Sgt. Porter and Sgt. Gardner for their recent promotions.

Mayor Oliveras shared a letter pertaining gratitude and appreciation.

Mrs. Sharon Ardisana, Villas, inquired why the public didn't get a copy of the audit prior to the meeting. Town Manager Smith it's common practice for the Mayor & Council to review prior to the public. Once, approval is granted the audit will be made available online.

With there being no further business, Councilman Holden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary