

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting
December 18, 2023

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Monday, December 18, 2023, beginning at 7:00 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, Cheryl Martin 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.

Mayor Shwed stated Mr. Brandon Tull from Lank, Johnson & Tull is here tonight to present the FY 2022 Audit. Mr. Tull stated he is the Audit Director of Lank, Johnson, & Tull where he provided 2022 Financial Statements to Mayor & Council for review. He advised the data will differ from today's totals as this is the FY 2022 Audit. He reviewed the General Funds liabilities, assets and revenue and he reviewed the Enterprise Fund of all departments. Mr. Tull after his presentation inquired if Mayor & Council had any questions. Town Manager Smith explained the town has an increase of assets due to the allotted federal funding the town has received including the ARPA Funds. Mr. Tull stated yes. Mayor Shwed stated FY 2022 seemed to be a solid financial year for the town. Mr. Tull stated yes FY 2022 was a very solid year for the town. Mayor Shwed thanked Mr. Tull for his presentation and his time.

Mayor Shwed presented the Officer Promotion Ceremony to newly promoted Senior Corporal Carlos Granados.

Mayor Shwed stated Mr. James West, resident of 802 West Street is in attendance tonight to present his handicap request. Mr. West stated he is requesting a sign or plaque to be installed in front of his front door on 8th Street for easier access to his property. Public Works Director Foskey stated he spoke with Mr. West and he advised Mayor & Council must approve this request and he recommended the handicap request to be on 8th Street due to it's a town maintain road. Mayor Shwed inquired if Chief Wright supported this request. Chief Wright stated yes.

Councilman Holden made a motion to accept Mr. James West, handicap request, resident of 802 West Street, to allow handicap parking at his front door of his property on 8th Street. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

The Mayor & Council Public Hearing Minutes of November 20, 2023, were presented for review and adoption. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the public hearing minutes of November 20, 2023. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

The Mayor & Council Regular Session and Closed Session Minutes of November 20, 2023, were presented for review and adoption. Councilman Oliveras made a motion to accept the regular and closed session minutes of November 20, 2023. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

The November 2023 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Director of Code Enforcement West stated he had no additions to his report.
- Public Works Director Foskey stated there has been falsified information circulating through social media regarding the towns water quality failing at four areas in town. He advised the town has received no violations and the Consumer Report is available for residents for review. The town received 5 inches of rain last night and Willow Street and Front Street were impacted. Central Avenue is scheduled to re-open by Friday, December 22, 2023, and is scheduled to close again for one to two days for sewer re-lining. Mayor Shwed stated according to the News Journal Del-DOT has reported the King Street Bridge construction will begin in 2024 and the Discount Land Road widening, installation of sidewalks and bicycle lanes are scheduled to begin in 2025 with a Public Workshop held in Spring of 2024. Town Manager Smith stated the repaving of Market Street and Central Avenue is expected to start in March 2024.
- Chief Wright stated the speed bumps on 7th Street have been removed due to snow removal as they're slated to be installed through April – November.
- Judge Ruffin stated she had no additions to her report. Councilman Kellam inquired if the new capias policy arrangements were held only through December. Judge Ruffin stated yes, and it hasn't been as successful as she hoped.
- Town Manager Smith stated she had no additions to her report.

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

Mayor Shwed presented the 2nd Reading of Ordinance 2023-3, Chapter 69 Curfew. Mayor Shwed stated the town is amending the ordinance to include the definition juvenile- any unemancipated person 17 years or less of age with curfew at eleven p.m. on all evenings (Monday – Sunday). The ordinance will take effect on January 1, 2024. Councilman Kellam made a motion to accept the 2nd and Final Reading of Ordinance 2023-3. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Councilman Oliveras stated how will the ordinance be articulated throughout the town. Town Manager Smith stated the town will post it on their Facebook page, towns website, and the Laurel Star. Vote was 7-0.

Town Manager Smith presented the Development Updates.

- **Rt 9 & Rt. 13 Properties:** Both developers are working together for connection of their developments and infrastructure. One developer is still working with Del-DOT to obtain their entrance permit.
- **Britt's & # 1 Chinese:** Currently still working and expected to open up in 2 months.
- **Rigbie:** The developers architect attended a P&Z Meeting where they were approved for their amendment Preliminary Site Plan.
- **Bargain Bills Property:** Developer will be submitting a Preliminary Site Plan to P&Z in February 2024.

Mayor & Council agreed to vote for the approval of the FY 2022 Audit at next months meeting in January to allow Mayor & Council to review.

Mayor Shwed presented the Mayor & Council Schedule for January and February.

January 2024

- **1st Meeting:** Tuesday, January 2, 2024 (Held Open If Needed)
- **2nd Meeting:** Tuesday, January 16, 2024

NOTE: Monday, January 1, 2024 – TOWN HALL CLOSED

Monday, January 15, 2024 – TOWN HALL CLOSED

February 2024

- **1st Meeting:** Monday, February 5, 2024 (Held Open If Needed)
- **2nd Meeting:** Tuesday, February 20, 2024

NOTE: Monday, February 19, 2024 – TOWN HALL CLOSED

Councilman Kellam made a motion to accept the proposed Mayor & Council Schedule for January and February as presented. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Town Manager Smith stated she has begun running the Finance Manager Position Advertisement and applications will be accepted until January 5, 2024.

Councilman Oliveras wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Councilman Kellam thanked the town staff for their hard work and wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish wished everyone Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.

Mayor Shwed wished everyone Happy Holidays.

A resident of Lake Drive stated Ordinance 2023-3, Chapter 69 Curfew, will not be enforceable on private properties and is the town looking into a resolution to this concern. Town Manager Smith stated they've reached out to the towns attorney and there is nothing federally the town can do due

to it being private property. Chief Wright stated the complexes owners have the authority to say no trespassing and may ask people to live if they don't reside there.

A resident of Little Creek, stated the lighting throughout the town is dull and the complexes are not up to code and didn't know if the town could address these concerns. Town Manager Smith advised the lighting in the complexes are private property and it's the complex owners responsibility. She advised the town is currently working with Delmarva Power as they will be gradually changing over to L.E.D lights. Mayor Shwed stated if a light pole is out each pole has a number and it can be reported to Delmarva Power. Mayor & Council encouraged the resident to continue to work with the complex owner regarding her code concerns.

Mr. Nicholas Little inquired about the vacant lot where #1 Chinese used to reside. Town Manager Smith advised the property owner received a variance from the Board of Adjustment for a proposal of apartments only. She advised right know he has not submitted any plans and he may still propose commercial on the bottom with apartments on top or just all apartments.

Mr. Little inquired if the school district will be able to handle the proposed housing developments on Rt. 13. Town Manager Smith stated all large developments must go through the PLUS Process with all state agencies including the Department of Education to relay the information to the school districts.

Mr. Little inquired if the house damaged by fire on Poplar Street will be demolished soon. Town Manager Smith advised the contractor is expected to demolish the house by the first week of January.

Mr. Little inquired if there was a loitering ordinance due to intoxicated individuals lingering at Market Street Square Park. Town Manager Smith stated there is no loitering ordinance due to it's a public park.

President of Council Calio made a motion to hold a closed session to discuss personnel and contractual matters. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Regular Session Recessed at 8:08 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened at 8:55 p.m.

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

Regular Session Adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary