

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting
February 18, 2025

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, beginning at 7:02 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor John Shwed, President of Council Chris Calio, Carlos Oliveras, Robin Fisher-Cornish, and George Lodato. Also, in attendance were Director of Code Enforcement Ken West, Public Works Director James Foskey, Chief Robert Kracyla, Judge Ruffin, Finance Manager Melissa Cassimore, and Town Manager Jamie Smith. It was noted that Councilman Jonathan Kellam, Councilman Donald Holden, and Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant were absent.

Mayor Shwed stated Mrs. Jane Morris -Seagraves, a Community Solar Specialist from Solar On Earth is in attendance to give a presentation. Mrs. Morris-Seagraves stated Community Solar is a federal program adopted within 20 states including Maryland and Delaware. She advised she can only work with Delmarva Power customers in the state of Delaware. She advised the program includes no cost, no installation on customers roofs or customers properties and customers can save 10% on their Delmarva Power bill. The program is a state funded program, and it has been active since 2021. She stated the benefits of this program are to help customers save money, reduce Co2 and boost the local economy. She provided an example of a Delaware Power Bill including the 10% saving. She stated there is a Renewable Charge Fund already included in the bill where customers are paying into the program. Mrs. Morris-Seagraves stated Town Manager Smith provided the towns bills and the estimate savings include: Small General Service (SGS) about \$2,000 savings. She explained there is a Medium General Service (MGS) but they're currently not being accepted by the developer that Delmarva Power is working with. The town could save on the low end \$350,000 with SGS only and on the high end \$500,000 including both SGS and MGS over a 20-year term. Mrs. Morris-Seagraves inquired if the Mayor & Council had any questions.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the program will shut down once all state funding is utilized. Mrs. Morris-Seagraves stated customers are continuing to pay into this program on their bill and doesn't see how funding would end.

Mayor Shwed inquired if everyone in the country is paying in this fund due to it's a federal program. Mrs. Morris-Seagraves stated no, only Delaware customers who have Delmarva Power.

Mrs. Morris-Seagraves stated a contract would need to be signed with the developer and the town. The terms of the contract include a 10-year term and a 5-year auto renewal with \$0.00 to cancel with 180 days' notice. She stated residential customers have a 1-year term with a 1-year auto renewal.

Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish inquired if there is a minimum amount of people required for the program. Mrs. Morris-Seagraves stated there is no minimum amount and developers like to sell out their farm.

Councilman Lodato inquired how does it affect people who already have solar. Mrs. Morris-Seagraves stated if their net metered within their home they would not be eligible to participate in the program.

Mrs. Morris-Seagraves explained customers will receive two bills every month with the first bill of a small balance with Delmarva Power and a second larger bill from the solar developer.

The Mayor & Council thanked Mrs. Morris-Seagraves for her presentation.

The Mayor & Council Regular Session Minutes of January 21, 2025, were presented for review. Councilman Oliveras made a motion to accept the regular session minutes of January 21, 2025. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilman Kellam and Councilman Holden absent.

The January 2025 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 he had no additions to his report. Mayor Shwed thanked Public Works Director Foskey and his team for a great job of snow removal.
- Chief Kracyla stated there were approximately 200 people who attended the Open House.
- Judge Ruffin stated she had no additions to her report.
- Finance Manager Cassimore stated she had no additions to her report.
- Town Manager Smith stated the Tap Funding Phase II is moving forward with anticipation of work beginning in spring and early summer. She advised she submitted another Tap Application for Phase I and also a Grant Application for Phase I to get under the railroad bridge for connectivity.

Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the January Department Head Reports as presented. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilman Kellam and Councilman Holden absent.

Town Manager Smith presented the Development Updates.

- **Wawa:** She spoke with the owner, and he has advised a final plan should be submitted in the near future. The owner is looking to purchase adjacent land for additional commercial development with the possibility of some residential development.
- **LRC, Oak Street Development:** Site work has begun on property.

Town Manager Smith presented the Election Update. She advised the General Municipal Election will take place on Thursday, March 27, 2025, at the Laurel Fire Department from 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. She advised the candidate filing deadline is Thursday, February 20, 2025, by 4:30 p.m. She advised the following contest include Ward 3, Council At-Large, and the Mayor. The Board of Election will review the candidate filing forms and then they will be submitted to the Department of Elections to make sure all proper paper work was submitted by the candidate.

Mayor Shwed stated he read in the News Journal that the first state is the fastest growing state in the nation with Laurel being ranked #13 out of #20 in municipalities in terms of population.

Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish announced this would be her last term and she has served for 24 years. She stated it has been a privilege and honor in serving the town and thanked everyone who she worked with.

Councilman Lodato thanked Public Works for cleaning and making the roads safe.

Councilman Lodato expressed his gratitude to Mayor Shwed for his hard work and all of his projects that he has implemented in the town.

A resident stated Laurel is a great place to live and citizens should be proud of this town.

Councilman Oliveras made a motion to hold a closed session to discuss contractual matters. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilman Kellam and Councilman Holden absent.

Regular Session Recessed at 7:47 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvey at 8:09 p.m.

With there being no further business, Councilman Lodato made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilman Kellam and Councilman Holden absent.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Mayor & Council Meeting
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Page. 4

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary