

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held in the Mayor & Council Chambers at Laurel Town Hall, on Monday, February 6, 2023, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor John Shwed, President of Council Chris Calio, Council Members Robin Fisher-Cornish via ZOOM, Cheryl Martin via ZOOM, Jonathan Kellam via ZOOM, and Donald Holden. Also, in attendance were Town Manager Jamie Smith and Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant. It was noted that Councilman Randy Lee was absent.

Mayor Shwed stated the purpose of tonight's meeting is to hear a PowerPoint presentation of Teacher Housing Concepts presented by Laurel's School District Superintendent, Dr. Shan Larrimore. Dr. Larrimore stated his purpose tonight is to share his ideas, visions, and needs to help create a partnership where Laurel can be a town where everyone can work here, live here, and play here. He stated three challenges the school district is facing (1.) National Teacher Shortage, (2.) a Property Poor District, and a (3.) a student population increase of 35%. Dr. Larrimore inquired how can we make Laurel a more vibrant town to attract young people. He explained he and his team at the District Office created a SWOT Analysis on Work Here, Live Here, and Play Here.

#### **SWOT ANALYSIS – Work Here**

- ***Strengths:*** The Laurel School District employs 350 employees, and the town has a large agriculture base.
- ***Weakness:*** We have a lack of industries.
- ***Opportunities:*** We have a triple benefit. We can attract agricultural businesses and establish new businesses.
- ***Threats:*** Neighboring cities.

#### **SWOT ANALYSIS – Live Here**

- ***Strengths:*** Featuring Broad Creek, potential developments and apartments, country housing, and affordable cost of living.
- ***Weaknesses:*** No abundance of affordable housing and little commercial opportunities.
- ***Opportunities:*** Create a bass tournament on Broad Creek and create housing for teachers.
- ***Threats:*** Neighboring cities.

Dr. Larrimore presented examples of Teacher Town where affordable housing developments are created to attract teachers to live and where a teaching contract is offered.

#### **SWOT ANALYSIS – Play Here**

- ***Strengths:*** We have good bones for a vibrant town, and we have a sense of community.
- ***Weaknesses:*** We have a decline of downtown businesses.
- ***Opportunities:*** Visions of becoming the next Berlin and we can create microbusinesses.
- ***Threat:*** Neighboring cities.

Dr. Larrimore stated his intentions are to create a partnership with the town to help fulfill a vibrant town where everyone wants to work here, live here, and play here. He stated in the 2021 Census Data, 49% of people choose to live rurally, but they don't because they can't work here, live here, or play here. He stated only 15% of people live rurally. Dr. Larrimore stated he created a 501 c (3) Teach Rural where they're eligible to receive grants and they will be partnering with Wilmington University. Dr. Larrimore advised Mr. Chad Alvarez from Digital Curve Marketing will be capturing video's to help tell the story of Laurel. Dr. Larrimore thanked Mayor & Council for their time and consideration.

Mayor Shwed thanked Dr. Larrimore for his informative presentation. Mayor Shwed gave a brief overview of what the town has accomplished in the past years. He advised the town has created a branding logan "Great Things Come Naturally." He stated according to the Census Data the town is one of the lowest earnings town in the state, which is due to 5 large subsidizing housings. Mayor Shwed explained the town is developing along the Broad Creek with the installation of Tidewater Park, Quest Kayaking tours, and partnerships with the LRC and Laurel Historical Society.

Town Manager Smith gave a brief overview of the potential housing developments. She advised the 410-housing development has received the Del-DOT requirements for upgrades and they have submitted upgrade proposals to their engineers to determine if the upgrades are feasible. Once they receive a Final Site Plan approval from the town then they may begin construction. She stated the 180-apartment complex has received Preliminary Site Plan approval from the town and they are awaiting all state approvals. She advised she met with a developer for workforce housing where housing is based on income and they must be employed. Their goal is for them to eventually be homeowners and the housing is funded the USDA and residents must be employed in an agricultural business.

Mayor & Council thanked Dr. Larrimore for his presentation and time.

Councilman Holden advised 105 West Street has trash along their yard and fence. Town Manager Smith advised the town will look into this matter.

Councilman Holden stated the former CasBar property has an extension cord running throughout the street and inquired if this was illegal. Town Manager Smith stated the town currently doesn't have a code in place and she will reach out to Del-DOT as this street is state maintained.

Councilwoman Martin stated she will be filing for re-election for Ward 4.

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

Meeting Adjourned at 8:04 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