

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2026

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Monday, May 18, 2026, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor Carlos Oliveras, President of Council Chris Calio, RogJenea Fisher via ZOOM, George Lodato, Jonathan Kellam, and Donald Holden. Also, in attendance were Public Works Director James Foskey, Director of Code Enforcement Dan Hogg, Chief Robert Kracyla, Finance Manager Melissa Naselli, Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant, and Town Manager Jamie Smith. It was noted that there was one vacancy on Mayor & Council.

Mayor Oliveras congratulated Tyrone and Laura Kellam for the flower bed installation at the Laurel Police Department.

Mayor Oliveras acknowledged Mrs. Stacy Lane and Mrs. Gail Bruce from the Laurel Public Library for holding their Story Walk at Market Street Square Park this past weekend.

Mayor Oliveras stated Mrs. Sharon Ardisana is attendance tonight to present on Transparency and Accountability. Mrs. Ardisana stated she met with Mayor Oliveras on April 2, 2026, to discuss her concerns with the hope he would handle them internally. She advised Mayor Oliveras didn't deny anything, and this is the reason why she's presenting tonight. She stated Mayor Oliveras asked very few questions and she had opened his eyes to things he was not aware of and recommended him to speak to the town staff and the town solicitor to verify that her concerns were valid. She advised Mayor Oliveras has not taken any action within 6 weeks to address her concerns. She stated the public deserves the facts to allow them to conclude their own conclusions. She stated that she is reporting the facts she discovered through FOIA requests. She stated she met on August 28, 2025, with Director of Code Enforcement West and Town Manager Smith requesting a Vacant House List, which contained 51 properties at the time. She was concerned that each year dozens of properties are deteriorating with no action being taken. She shared her concerns with 404 S. Central Avenue and was told there was no funding in the budget to be demolished and to put a lien on the property. She advised that she was told the property owner was in the process of obtaining a building permit and renovating the property. She stated it has been eight months, and nothing has been done with the property. She stated Laurel has been identified as the worst place in Delaware and the second biggest issue in towns is vacant housing. She stated a vacant ordinance was adopted by the town in 2017 that went into effect FY 2019, which she provided a brief overview of the ordinance. She inquired if the town assesses fines or fees to the property and she was told there was no point in implementing fines or fees. She advised if 30 properties were placed on the vacant house list the town had the potential to receive \$270,000 revenue. She stated with the 50 properties placed on the vacant house list provided the town should have generated \$458,000 in revenue. She stated the town management and Mayor & Council are obligated to follow the town rules and ordinances that are implemented. She stated 50 homes were identified as vacant and there were only 18 listed on the register list. From 2019 to 2023 there were no homes added to the register. She advised vacant properties are allowed to deteriorate with no penalty to homeowners. The second concern she addressed was pertaining to Financial Department Reporting. She stated each month the Finance Manager submits a financial report to Mayor & Council under the discretion of

the Town Manager. She inquired if Mayor Oliveras receives an additional finance reporting rather than the monthly financial report and he stated no. She expressed her concerns that this report only shows limited revenue sources. She stated the town manager is required to render a true report of all revenue sources to regular monthly Mayor & Council Meetings. The third concern she addressed is the completion of the town audit. She stated the town is two years behind in the audit and per the town charter they must complete the audit after 90 days of the fiscal year. She stated the town will be three years behind in October pertaining to the audit. She stated the Mayor & Council and town management have failed to enforce in three areas including enforcing the vacant house ordinance, financial revenue reporting, and meeting the audit deadline. She requested if Mayor & Council could review her concerns and take appropriate action and inquired if the code report could include the vacant house registry. She advised she was not under the understanding that a motion had to take place for her request of an analysis report pertaining the Alderman Court and is inquiring for a motion. She stated she was denied a place on the agenda by Mayor Oliveras requesting 45 minutes originally with a second request of 20 minutes submitted which she was allotted. Mrs. Ardisana thanked the Mayor & Council and the public for their time and inquired if there were any questions.

Mayor Oliveras inquired if he could have a copy of Mrs. Ardisana's presentation. Mrs. Ardisana stated yes, she will provide a copy.

Councilman Kellam inquired if Town Manager Smith could provide a brief overview of the towns audit situation.

Town Manager Smith stated in September 2022 the town was notified that Sombar would no longer be performing audits. The town went through the bid process and selected Lank, Johnson, & Tull where they began working in the summer of 2023. She explained with the unexpected passing of Finance Manager Introcaso in October 2023 the audit process was delayed. She stated the auditors are in the process of completing FY 24, which they will roll into FY 25 and FY26.

Councilman Lodato made a motion for Mayor & Council to investigate Mrs. Ardisana's concerns as it pertains to the vacant house ordinance and cost reporting and that they report back to the Mayor & Council and to the residents.

Councilman Lodato made a motion that Mayor & Council look into the revenue stream if the J.P. Court replaced the Alderman Court. He stated he is not saying to replace the court but to investigate alternatives. Councilman Kellam stated we should look into the facts and not speculation. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 2-4, with one vacancy. Councilpersons President of Council Calio, Councilwoman Fisher, Councilman Holden, and Mayor Oliveras opposed.

Mayor Oliveras stated Mr. Ron Handy is in attendance tonight to give a presentation on the GVI Update. Mr. Cory Priest stated he is the Director of the Office Community for the Attorney General. He stated GVI originated in Wilmington, Delaware. In 2016, the Center of Disease Control came into the city and declared it a health crisis due to gun violence. He stated in 2023 the Town of Laurel had high profile shootings where the governor met with local constituents pertaining gun violence. The initiative was implemented into the town where help and resources

are offered to individuals to change their pattern. Mr. Sam Ford, Director of Operation Correction Probation & Parole and Mr. Ron Handy, Leaders In Transition Program were also in attendance where they provided the benefits of GVI. Mr. Priest stated a Laurel Family Fun Day will be held on June 6, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Mayor & Council thanked all the representatives for their time and presentation.

Mayor Oliveras stated Mrs. Precious Henry is in attendance tonight present a Youth Update Presentation. Mrs. Henry stated she is interested in having more youth events and engagement within our town. She stated Councilwoman Fisher held a youth bowling event this past Saturday where 20 youths attended. She advised she wants our youth to do better by creating programs and showing that our town believes in them. Mayor & Council thanked Mrs. Precious for her time and presentation.

The Mayor & Council Regular and Closed Session Minutes of April 20, 2026, were presented for review. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of April 20, 2026, as presented. Councilwoman Fisher seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

The April 2026 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Public Works Director Foskey stated the Transite Main Replace on 8th Street is completed with just a few punch items. He stated the Promenade is back underway.
- Director of Code Enforcement Hogg stated there were 12 vehicles written for expired/no tags, 2 towed, 21 permits issued, 2 new home permits issued, 1 stop work order, and 47 cases and 5 water lockouts.
- Judge Mirro stated he had no additions or changes to his report.
- Chief Kracyla stated he has been working with state agencies pertaining to the Block Party held at Little Creek on April 18, 2026. He stated Severn Management, the management company that oversees Little Creek and Holly Brook are reviewing enforcement strengthening strategies that include fencing/gating. He advised the department held interviews with-in for CVSA (Liar Detector). He stated the youth academy will be held the second week in August and looking for applicants in the following grade levels 6th to 10th grade. He and Captain Bryan have applied for grants and are hopeful in receiving them.

- Finance Manager Naselli stated if a resident is inquiring about their balance they can call the town. She advised if a resident sends in a bank check the transaction doesn't occur the same date and it can take up to two weeks to process. She stated a monthly trash, yardwaste, and recycle monthly calendar are available at town hall for residents review. A resident can also call the town pertaining their usage and a report can be printed.
- Town Manager Smith stated she spoke with the developer pertaining Wawa and they're awaiting the permit from the Soil Conservation. They were looking to attend June's P&Z Meeting to submit their final site plan. If the permit is not received prior to the meeting the approval will be contingent upon receiving the permit. Their goal is to break ground and begin site work in September. The walkway in Janosik Park has been completed and the plantings have been completed two weeks ago and turned over to the town. She stated the Main Street Assessment will be on June 2, 2026, and June 3, 2026, which is two days of meetings. Once the agenda is finalized, she will send out to Mayor & Council.

President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the April Department Head Reports as presented. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Town Manager Smith provided an 11th Street Update. She stated a resident of West Street attended a Mayor & Council Meeting and requested the closure of 11th Street. She stated per town policy herself, Public Works Director Foskey, and Chief Kracyla met regarding this request. They're recommending not closing the street as the last property residing on the street is eligible for development and the town doesn't want to limit their access. She advised the Street Committee can review and look into this request further or Mayor & Council can approve the town staff's recommendation. After a brief discussion, President of Council Calio made a motion not to close 11th Street as based on the town officials proposed recommendation. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Town Manager Smith provided an Update on Opened & Unfinished Items. Town Manager Smith stated at the last Mayor & Council Meeting Councilman Lodato brought up open and unfinished items not being listed on the agenda. She explained all the matters that have been brought up have been answered. She stated it's up to Mayor & Council to take action on any Planning & Zoning and Board of Adjustment amendment matters. She advised the town's attorney attended the January Mayor & Council Meeting where he also explained the procedure. She stated the code violation matter was addressed that they were protected under FOIA even when a violation is closed. Town Manager Smith recommended doing a complete re-zoning with Planning & Zoning and Mayor & Council going through proper process. She has proposed a consultant to complete an update to the zoning ordinance be included in this year's upcoming budget.

Town Manager Smith presented the 1st Reading of Ordinance 2026-2, Amending Chapter 69, Curfew. She stated a curfew ordinance was implemented in 1998 with amendments by past police

chiefs. She advised they're recommending the following amendments which include: 18 years old and under for all days of the week, officers shall use his or her best judgment coupled with their knowledge, training and experience to determine the age, the police officer at the scene can provide a written warning, and a minimum \$50.00 fine for the first offense. She stated Chief Kracyla and Captain Bryan are in attendance if Mayor & Council had any further questions. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the 1st Reading of Ordinance 2026-2 as presented. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Town Manager Smith presented the 1st Reading of Ordinance 2026-3, Amending Chapter 157 Utility Construction and Repair. Town Manager Smith stated the amendment includes any town roadway, the town will contract with an approved contractor from the Approved Contractor's List to obtain a set price for the install of water and sewer service lines to a property. The fee for this is required to be paid at the time the building permit is obtained. Public Works Foskey stated Mayor & Council passed the Utility Ordinance last year as this prevents dwellings being built on properties with no water/sewer. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the 1st Reading of Ordinance 2026-3 as presented. Councilwoman Fisher seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Mayor Oliveras presented the Public Participation Policy. Mayor Oliveras stated public comment shall be subject to the following procedures, which shall be administered by the Mayor, or in their absence, the presiding officer of the Town Council. Each speaker will be asked to provide their name and address on a sign-up sheet, which will be available at the podium. Each speaker shall come forward to the podium after being recognized and will be asked to identify themselves on record by providing their name and address. Each speaker will have 3 minutes to present their public comments. Time for each public comment will be kept by electronic clock and displayed within view of the podium. At the end of that time, the Mayor or the presiding officer of Council will inform the speaker their allotted time has expires. The total period available for public comment during a meeting may not exceed 30 minutes. The Mayor or the presiding officer of Council can authorize an extension of the public comment. Based on the number of requests for public comment the presiding officer of Council may grant a speaker, at a maximum, 2 additional minutes. After a brief discussion, Councilman Lodato made a motion to table the Public Participation Policy until next month to allow more time to review. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Councilman Lodato stated resident Mr. Steve Kramer addressed his concerns regarding 235 Market Street at last months meeting and at this time last year. Councilman Lodato is requesting a motion that Mayor & Council review property 235 Market Street pertaining the blight and provide an answer to Mr. Kramer. Town Manager Smith stated this property was originally zoned commercial and after the zoning change it was re-zoned to town center and the property was grandfathered in. The Mayor & Council can disperse of the business by not allowing it as a permitted use anymore but they must give the property owner a reasonable amount of time. Town Manager Smith stated a zoning ordinance amendment would need to be implemented as the property is a

conditional use. Town Manager Smith stated Mayor & Council can go through the process or they can wait until the re-zoning change. Councilman Lodato made a motion to look into the property 235 Market Street prior to the re-zoning change. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Town Manager Smith stated it is a process, which includes Mayor & Council making a recommendation. She stated she will work with the attorney to draft an amendment to go in front of Planning & Zoning as they review all zoning amendments. Planning & Zoning will then bring back their recommendation to Mayor & Council whether they can accept or deny the recommendation. Vote was 5-1, with one vacancy.

Councilwoman Fisher thanked Mrs. Henry for providing her youth update presentation. She also stated that the Youth Bowling Event held this past weekend was well attended.

Councilman Lodato stated he was unaware it was his responsibility to make a motion to carry open items on the agenda under old business and to follow-up on them accordingly.

Councilman Lodato stated he requested a business license committee in June, August, and September last year to be established. He is requesting a motion for Mayor & Council to review the business licenses within the town. Councilman Lodato raised the concern regarding Bargain Bills and inquired in looking at the fees. Councilman Lodato stated per town code business signage is not a requirement.

Director of Code Enforcement Hogg stated he can provide a copy of the City of Salisbury's zoning ordinance pertaining business signage for the town to model after for Mayor & Council's review.

President of Council Calio inquired if the town could look into Bargain Bills. Town Manager Smith stated yes.

President of Council Calio stated the Alderman Court has been in the red for the first time in his memory and cases are down by 32%. He advised the court can only do the cases that are presented to them.

Councilman Kellam congratulated the Laurel High School Track and Field team participating in the state championships this past weekend where the boys placed in 2nd.

Councilman Kellam stated Trap Pond will be holding a Juneteenth Celebration on the Jason Beach side on Friday, June 19, 2026.

Councilwoman Fisher recommended if the town could approve a resolution for Mr. John Hollis who passed away recently. Town Manager Smith stated yes.

Mayor Oliveras stated there were several great town events this past weekend that included: St. Phillips Strawberry Festival, Fisher Family Bus Tour, Pastor Rob Men's Group at Trap Pond, and the Youth Bowling Event held by Councilwoman Fisher.

Mayor Oliveras stated he spoke with the town staff three weeks ago as he felt compelled to meet with them regarding the Alderman Court proposal and he advised them that no drastic measures will be taken place as he is continuing to look at the betterment of the town. Mayor Oliveras read a statement pertaining the benefits why the Alderman Court should remain within the town. He listed several benefits which include:

- It allows the police officers and code to remain within the community rather than traveling to J.P. Court that can take several hours for their case to be heard.
- Trials are scheduled when police officers are on duty to reduce any gaps.
- It allows residents to have a short commute to pay fine or attend a trial.
- The process for the town to transition to J.P. Court will include a town charter change that would require legislative improvement by the local government.

Mrs. Ardisana advised 41% of cases were down for the Alderman Court per the Delaware State Website. She stated in her report it was a \$9,000.00 lost and it was verified by Town Manager Smith that the lost was \$24,500.00 that contributed to 41% of cases of being down. She stated today the Alderman Court is at 38% realized revenue and we are at 85% of the year. She explained she doesn't want residents to pay \$200,000 on taxes for a department that is losing revenue. She recommended the town fund the court this year and re-evaluate next year.

Mrs. Michelle Harris stated they have re-scheduled their event to July 25, 2026, and invited Mayor & Council. They will be holding a Back to School Bash where groceries and fellowship will be provided.

Mrs. Lana Betts stated Dewey and Rehoboth Beach Alderman Courts are earning 2 million in revenue and encouraged the town to look into the fines they're receiving as it's costing the town money to operate.

Mr. Don D'Aquila stated the Mayor & Council and town staff are very proactive and are dedicated to the town.

Councilman Lodato thanked Mayor Oliveras for the report presented on the Alderman Court.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the town would be a sponsor for the Broad Creek Bash Sponsor as he has mentioned in the past two meetings. Town Manager Smith stated the town typically doesn't sponsor events as they do not want to set a precedent but it's ultimately up to Mayor & Council.

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Councilman Holden made a motion to hold a closed session to discuss contractual matters. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Regular Session Recessed at 9:13 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened at 10:55 p.m.

With there being no further business, President of Council Calio made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:56 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary