

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. Before she closed, she thought it was important that the public knew she was denied a place on tonight's agenda twice by the Mayor. Her first request was 45 minutes, then she reduced it to 20, thinking okay maybe 45 is too long, but she wanted to allow time for questions and answers. From the April 2 meeting, Mayor Oliveras knew exactly what she planned to discuss tonight, because she'd already reviewed all of this with him in hopes that he would take care of it, and she would not be standing here. In her third response, she raised her First Amendment right to speak and noted that criticism of public officials, by office or by name is permitted when those officials are directly responsible for the matters being discussed. She also objected when he attempted to impose a three-minute public comment limit, starting May 18, 2026, even though that rule had not previously been enforced against other citizens. She copied the town solicitor on her response. The next morning, she was added to the agenda. Mrs. Ardisana thanked the Mayor & Council and the public for their time and inquired if there were any questions. **(ATTACHED ARE MRS. ARDISANA'S TRANSCRIPT OF HER PRESENTATION AND THE EMAIL EXCHANGE BETWEEN MAYOR OLIVERAS & THE COUNCIL)**

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'Aquilla stated the Mayor & Council and town staff are very proactive and are dedicated to the town.

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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.

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

Good evening, Mr. Mayor, Council, town management, and fellow citizens. I'm here tonight to talk about accountability and transparency. I met with the Mayor on April 2 to discuss my concerns, in the hope that he would handle them internally. He did not deny anything I presented to him, which is why I'm presenting it tonight. He asked very few questions and said that I had opened his eyes to things he was not aware of. I asked him not to take my word for it, but to speak with council members and the town solicitor to verify that my concerns were valid. Six weeks, six weeks later, I received no questions or feedback from him, and he has taken no action that I can see. It gives me no pleasure to stand up here and point out these issues in a public meeting, but I feel that I have been left with no other choice. The public deserves to know the facts as I understand them, and to form your own conclusions. I'm just reporting the facts that I've uncovered through FOIA requests.

On August 28, 2025 I met with the code enforcement director, who was a different person back then, and the town manager. I had requested a list of vacant properties and received a list of 51 homes at this meeting. I was concerned that dozens of vacant homes just seemed to deteriorate each year with no action being taken. I was particularly concerned about the dangerous property at 404 South Central. I was told that there was no funding in the budget for the Central Avenue house to be demolished and a lien placed on the property. I was also told that the owner was applying for a building permit and had indicated that he was going to renovate at that point. This property had been condemned for almost five years. Renovation at that point is just really not very plausible. It is now eight months later, and no renovation efforts have started. When I asked about fees and fines, I was told that there was no point in charging owners because they never pay. I did not find any of these answers reassuring. This is what led me to look further into our policies on this subject, and request data to see what was actually happening. Surely, there was something we could, that could be done. This issue affects neighborhoods, property values, public safety, and the future of our town. We know that Laurel has been identified as the worst place to live in Delaware. This makes others not want to move here, and businesses not want to invest here. How can we expect economic growth under these circumstances? Vacant homes are the second biggest public concern, next to drugs and group violence. I decided I needed an understanding of what the town ordinances and codes were related to this topic.

My research began with learning about the vacant house ordinance. In October 2017 Mayor Schwed signed the vacant home ordinance, which was incorporated into our town code. Please bear with me as I give a brief overview because it's important. And in that ordinance it said all vacant homes must register and registration must be renewed on an annual basis for as long as the house is vacant. There is a table of fees that start out \$500 when you register and go all the way up to \$1,500 a year for five years or more of being a vacant home. If the owner does not pay, it can be added to their property tax bill. Any owner violating

these provisions in this chapter can also be taken to court and fined. The first time is a fine of not less than 500 and not more than 1500 and a possible imprisonment, not less than 10 days, nor more than 20 days. Second offenses are even steeper fines and more prison time. This ordinance should have taken effect in FY 19.

Speaker 9 10:57

If 30 homes have been placed on this registry, and charge fees through the current year, the potential revenue is \$270,000. If the 50 homes on the list I was given back in August had been registered in 2019 the potential revenue to the town would be 450,000. This does not include revenue that would have been received through fines if owners had been taken to court. While we may not receive all the revenue from owners, we know that, it doesn't give the town management the right to just not charge them fees. They are obligated to follow town ordinances and codes. They do not get to pick and choose which ones they follow. After understanding the ordinance, I did a FOIA request to see a current list of the registered vacant homes. Again, I did not start out with any ill intent. I asked questions, I didn't get the answers that I thought I would get, and so I investigated myself and as you know, it's a proverbial rabbit hole. Once you start going down, there's more, and there's more, and there's more. So I asked for a list of registered vacant homes. Now, remember that every vacant home must be registered. The registry I received contained 24 properties. From the list I was given in August in 2025 One home was renovated and sold by the Historic Society, leaving 50 homes identified less than a year ago. Only 18 of those homes were listed in the registry. Where are the other 32 homes, especially since they can be added by code enforcement. An owner does not have to register. If code enforcement becomes aware of a vacant home, they can add it and to the registry and bill the owner. Okay, so I don't understand any reason for there not being at least those 50 homes in the registry. If they were on the list, but do not appear on the registry now, it would indicate to me that they are no longer vacant. You only have to drive around town to know this is probably not the case. I would venture to guess that the total number of vacant homes is greater than 50, easily. Why are they not on the register, and subsequently being fined? That's what the ordinance says we're supposed to do. No home has been on this registry for more than four years. This suggests that no homes were added to the registry between 2019 and 2023. In other words, there's appears to have been a four year gap between the date the ordinance was signed and the time that the first home was added to the registry. That's four years in which town management appears not to have enforced a law already on the books. This is a very serious lack of following mandated duties during these years. Vacant properties were allowed to deteriorate further with no meaningful consequences to the owners. Without

enforcement, there is very little incentive to repair, sell, or improve these properties. It also means years of lost revenue. So, I ask again, what is the value of past passing an ordinance if town management and council do not enforce it? Please let me be clear. This is not a personal attack. You know most of the council and town manager, I don't know them personally, you know, this is about whether public officials are carrying out public responsibilities. When officials hold positions of trust, the public has every right to expect accountability. Yes, okay.

I would now like to move to financial reporting. Each month, the financial department manager, under the direction of the town manager, produces the report that you have should have in your packets. If anybody would like a copy, I can pass around some copies of the report. Okay, in my April 2 meeting with the Mayor, I specifically asked him if he received any further financial reports each month from the town manager, more than just this. His response was no. This report clearly indicates that these are some of the revenues to date, not all. In the mandate, it says that the town manager shall render to the town council at every regular monthly meeting of each and every month a true, accurate, and detailed account of all monies collected or received by him in the performance of his duties, and shall promptly turn that same over to the town council.

Speaker 9 16:05

So, a list of some of the revenues is not a list of all the revenues, that's again not following the mandate. Okay. The fact that this is the only requirement alarms me. Our town Charter was written many years ago and has undergone a couple of big changes, overhauls, but there's no requirement in the charter to report on expenses, so if you get this report and you see some of the revenues, how do you know the health of our budget? You don't, right? We have no idea what the expenses are, or what the total revenues are, nor does the council or mayor, which I believe is a problem. Very alarming to me. Nobody has any idea where this money is going. Although it is not a mandate to account for expenses in the town charter, good financial oversight is not complicated. The standard tools used by most towns is the year to date budget versus actual reports with modern financial systems, this information can be produced with the push of a button. It provides insight not only to the revenues to date, but also expenses, giving the mayor and council a good picture of the health of our budget. It's an effective way to monitor if we are projected to be over or under budget and identify specific areas that are red flags. Monthly check registers are also a common report provided in other towns. This report shows every distribution made during the month, who it was made to, and what it was for, and the amount. A final report that is also common is the bank balance report. This report shows every bank account, money market, savings,

reserves, everything, along with beginning balances and withdrawals and ending balances. Many towns not only provide these reports to mayor and council but also post them to their website as well. This is what transparency and accountability look like. Instead, we have a report that does not meet the charter minimal requirements. The office of the town manager has a \$7 million budget with virtually no oversight or accountability. If we don't speak up about this, I guarantee you that nothing will change. I believe our town deserves better, and each of us should ask our council members why this lack of oversight has been allowed for years. I'm almost finished. I was looking for data that I could evaluate where the money was going myself. I discovered that the town is two years behind in our annual audits. In October of this year, we will be three years behind. The town charter in section 24 says the auditor shall honor before expiration of 90 days from the end of the fiscal year, annually make and deliver a detailed report of any and all accounts, records, and books, by then examined and audited, which report under his hand and seal, and shall be available to for public inspection. So, unless I'm misinterpreting that, which is a possibility, our audit should be completed 90 days after the end of the fiscal year, not two or three years later. In October, it will be, will be three years behind in my view. There's absolutely no reason for this. Audit costs should be programmed into the annual budget and performed within 90 days of the fiscal year. Why is it so hard to meet this deadline? Other towns not only meet deadlines, but the audits are also posted for public review. Again, this is what transparency means. So, let me summarize by saying I believe what the evidence shows. The town manager has failed to carry out mandated duties in at least three areas. Failure to fully implement and enforce the vacant home ordinance. This has not reduced our vacant home problem, it's allowed the problem to grow. Failure to report all revenues received on monthly financial report to mayor and council. That may sound technical and small, but it points to a much larger problem, the weak oversight, the weak transparency, the weak accountability, and that nobody, in my opinion, nobody has a grasp on the budget, and where we stand, and where also importantly, where the money's going. Failure to meet the 90 day audit deadline, leaving the public council without timely financial information. When audits are years behind, the public cannot clearly see the town's financial condition. That's another serious barrier to accountability. These three cases to me suggest a pattern.

Speaker 9 21:32

The administration of the town and its charter are the town manager's responsibility. The buck stops there. However, council members who have been on the board for 10, 15, 20 years or more must also accept responsibility. These failures have been going on for years. The fact that mayor and council have no insight into the financial status of our budget is

appalling to me. They have absolutely no idea where the taxpayers' dollars are going. We have two new council members who are looking at things with fresh eyes and are asking relevant questions. Please listen to them. I would like to make the following request. I would like Mayor and Council to review what was presented tonight, and take appropriate action. I would ask that code enforcement include the status of vacant house registry as part of their monthly reporting. Since I was told that my request last month for an analysis if the town were to use the Justice of the Peace Court instead of the Alderman Court, apparently my requesting that is not enough. I did not understand that, so forgive me. I am adding the request here, and hope that a council member will support it. It has to be supported. A motion has to be made by a council member. Okay, I stand behind the facts I present tonight. They are based on data I received through FOIA request. As I said last month, I have misinterpreted anything, I will offer a public apology. But if these facts are correct, action needs to be taken. I'm only one person, and I've done all I can to bring these issues into the open and point out what I believe needs immediate attention. It's now up to the public to decide if they are going to hold the town manager and council accountable. They're all nice people, that is not the question. The question is, are they performing their duties? If we do not, we should expect more blight, less confidence, fewer residents willing to stay, and fewer businesses willing to invest. At some part, if we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem, and we will continue to live in the worst town in Delaware. Before I close, I also think it's important that the public know I was denied a place on tonight's agenda twice by the mayor. My first request was for 45 minutes, then I reduced it to 20, thinking, okay, maybe 45 is too long, but I wanted to allow time for questions and answers. From our April 2 meeting, he knew exactly what I planned to discuss tonight, because I'd already reviewed all of this with him in hopes that he would take care of it, and I would not be standing here. In my third response, I raised my First Amendment right to speak and noted that criticism of public officials, by office or by name is permitted when those officials are directly responsible for the matters being discussed. I also objected when he attempted to impose a three minute public comment limit, starting may 18, even though that rule had not previously been enforced against other citizens. I copied the town solicitor on my response. The next morning, I was added to the agenda. I will leave it up to you to deduce what you will from this information. Thank you for your time and attention. If anyone has any questions, I will do my best to answer them.

Speaker 11 25:49

And you said we haven't passed the audit in three years.

Speaker 9 25:53

No, sir, we haven't done an audit in over two years. We are behind. Okay,

Speaker 11 26:11

so 24 and 25 have not been done, and we're coming up on 26 right?

Did you accommodate audits? Have we failed? You said that's about 10 years. How many have we failed?

Speaker 9 26:20

With all due respect, that's not relevant to what I'm saying.

Speaker 11 26:25

Yes it is, because if you're saying we're not doing oversight and stuff, we should have failed the audits in the past.

Speaker 9 26:32

Okay, audits per the audit, or talking with the auditor, and per my understanding, is that the auditor told me they're not really looking for areas where things are not correct, per se. No, what they're looking for is they are looking to make sure that your, whatever your actuals turned out to be, that they are in line with your budget, and that there's no gross difference between the two, that you're not grossly miscalculating your budget.

Speaker 11 27:13

Did you say you went back 10 years? You didn't say you were back 10 years

Speaker 9 27:16

No. I went back about three years.

Speaker 11 27:22

but she said that, you know, there's council people have been on there for 10 years. Oh no, which includes me. So, if my question is, and you can answer that, no, since you know, since you know if it's been, if the budget has been not, not up to par for the 10 years that I've been on here. How come it has not been addressed by the auditor, by the state, by the federal council? Because it's been a lot of towns that have not passed their audits.

Speaker 9 27:56

My statement had nothing to do, whether we pass audits or not. My statement says we are not meeting the mandate to perform these audits within 90 days. That has nothing to do with whether they pass or fail. It's a mandate in the charter to do this. They are two years behind, so they're not meeting that mandate, that's what I'm saying.

Speaker 11 28:22

Could you address the reason?

Speaker 13 28:30

Thank you. I'm trying to think of the year, I think it was October 2022 We had an auditor, John Barr, who had been in our audits for years, and maybe September, he advised that he was no longer going to be doing our audit. We had to go out and do a bid for audits. We received bids, opened them up, and selected Lang Johnson and Hall as our auditor. They were in the midst of their audits, as they do a lot of municipalities in Delaware and Maryland, and then it pushed them back on a timeline, they had to set us up, so they started in the spring of October, I mean, I'm sorry, spring of 2023 summer 2023 and they were working with our finance manager at that time, and she passed away unexpectedly in October, so that push that finishing that audit until we had somebody come in and be able to get them all the information, so they did make that presentation for 2022 audit. I don't know about a year ago, I don't know the exact date they did, I believe in January the 23 audit, and they had a draft audit for 24 so they should be coming to us within the next month or two for that, and then they will roll right in. They've already started the 25 . When you finish the 25 they will go into the 27.

Speaker 11 29:53

So, from my understanding, what you're saying is that we just wasn't doing what was proper, but when you have your finance manager unexpectedly die, we just can't take somebody off the street and get them to do that, and then when you have an auditor that says he's not going to audit no more, what do you do? You go try to find another auditor. We want to have to make sure that the auditors, we had to check them out and do everything, so we could be responsible for my constituents' money, and because it's part of my money too. And so you're saying you're making it like, like Jamie's not doing her job, where she is, and that, and that is not true. I said, but if you're going to research something, research it. Don't nitpick and say, oh, this is not this, and this is not that. Did you know the finance director died? Did you know? Did you know?

Speaker 9 30:58

With all due respect, the excuses are one thing, you have a mandate to do this within 90 days, it doesn't say

Speaker 11 31:12

so. We could have went and got you to come to our.

Speaker 14 31:19

Either you meet the mandate or you don't. What the reasons are is irrelevant.

Speaker 11 31:26

whatever you say, but you know if you can't respect that Mary died, I do.

Speaker 6 31:32

Find somebody else, is it take three years to recover, research, and have facts.

Speaker 9 31:41

Yes, does it have speculations and stuff?

Speaker 9 31:48

It's not speculation. We are three years behind, and somebody's death should not put us three years behind. Somebody else should have jumped in and got the accountant the information he needed.

Speaker 11 32:00

pick up someone off the street just to do a job that is professional, that we're responsible for, and you want us to just go off.

Speaker 13 32:16

Yes, but what I said was we had to go out on applications

Speaker 3 32:31

when I joined her next meeting. Thank you. Okay. Thank you very much.

Speaker 8 32:43

I have something that I would like to have said. First, you know, reminder, it's the residents who have the power by utilizing their voice that helps support this community. Second, I'd like to make a motion by Mayor and Council to investigate Mrs. Ardisana's concerns as it pertained to the vacant house ordinance and cost reporting, and that they report back to the council and to our residents. I'd also like to make a motion for Mayor and Council to further investigate what revenue stream would be if the JP court replaced the alderman's court. Now this is just, it's not saying to do it, my thing was we should at least look into it, you know, without, without making changes. If we are in fact, which I don't have the facts that we are losing money, and I think it's something that we should have. We should be looking into alternatives. Not that we're going to replace them. I'm not saying replace them, but we should at least realize, you know, or expect what are our alternatives to a situation, and I'd like to make a motion that we look into that. Just to look into our alternatives. Thank you.

Speaker 3 34:09

You're welcome. Do I have a second on that?

Speaker 11 34:16

We'll look into it, we'll come back, and we'll come back with the facts.

Speaker 3 34:22

All those in favor, all those opposed. What's the count there, please?

Speaker 16 34:42

One with

Speaker 11 34:52

the facts, with the facts, not speculation, not what you think.



Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Request for time on the May council meeting agenda

16 messages

Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 22, 2026 at 1:41 PM

To: Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>, Jamie Smith <laureltm@comcast.net>, George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>, Chief Kracyla Rob <robert.kracyla@cj.state.de.us>

Cc: Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Hello All,

I would like to please be allowed 45 minutes on May's agenda. The topic will be Transparency and Accountability.

Thank you,

Sharon Ardisana

Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 22, 2026 at 5:02 PM

To: Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Good afternoon Sharon,

I will not grant permission for a 45 minute presentation on accountability and transparency.

If you wish to share your concerns, I would prefer you put it in writing, so that Mayor and council can have a chance to read, analyze and respond if needed.

I will not have any personal being questioned, accused or embarrassed in a public setting.

If you want to discuss concerns about accountability and transparency, out of respect for personal it should be done in a private setting, where it doesn't become a public spectacle.

The monthly meeting are for sharing information, town concerns and updates.

Monday's meeting was not a good look in respect to bringing up the possibility of eliminating an entire department, which, concerned several employees and created an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust.

Please forward in writing any of your concerns and as mayor and council we will review with the attention it deserves.

Respectfully

Mayor Oliveras.

[Quoted text hidden]

Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Mon, May 4, 2026 at 3:21 PM

To: Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>, George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>, Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>, dnldholden@yahoo.com, rogjeneafisher1@gmail.com

Hello Mr. Mayor,

Perhaps the amount of time I requested was an issue. I was allowing time for any questions the public may have. I can condense my presentation into 20 minutes. My presentation will

be looking at our processes for registering Vacant Homes and overall Code Enforcement. You and I discussed these items in our April 2nd meeting at my house. Please reconsider adding me to the agenda. I await your response.

Council members - I have attached the entire thread of my emails so that you can come up to speed. Since Councilman Kellam is having technical difficulties with his email, I will try to get him a copy through text.

Regards,
Sharon

[Quoted text hidden]

Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>

Mon, May 4, 2026 at 4:00 PM

To: Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Cc: George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>, Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>, donald holden <dnldholden@yahoo.com>, RogJenea Fisher <rogjeneafisher1@gmail.com>

Hello Sharon,

I would rather have you submit your concerns on paper, of which I can share with the council.

We are implementing a three minute limit on public comments, as the meetings are getting larger.

I would not want to set a system where sensitive concerns, can become a public spectacle.

We can methodically tackle any concerns, however they must go through the proper procedures, and proper settings so that our energies can best serve the community, and achieve results.

A public setting is a place where things can become emotional and personal and that's why I avoid those situations it will only serve to divide us.

You certainly have a right to make an appointment with the code inspector and ask those kind of questions in a more private setting.

As I mentioned before of course you can submit everything on paper and we will look at your concerns with the attention it deserves.

[Quoted text hidden]

Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>

Tue, May 5, 2026 at 9:07 AM

Reply-To: Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>

To: Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

So, instead of going to the Town Manager you went directly to Mayor and Council with your concerns? Skipping some steps in the chain of command. I guess that's one way to address a concern.

My two cents,
Chris

Every Storm Runs Out of Rain Maya Angelou

On Monday, May 4, 2026 at 06:15:12 PM EDT, Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com> wrote:

I feel that is the Mayor's (and possibly Council's) job. He had ample time to digest what I told him and speak with her and/or the Council. I would have been happy to meet with him again to acknowledge any corrective information he had. As I say in my presentations - if I have misunderstood or misinterpreted a fact - I am happy to apologize. I am not afraid of standing corrected. But totally ignoring my concerns was not a professional thing to do. My two cents.

Sharon



On Mon, May 4, 2026 at 5:19 PM Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com> wrote:
Have you taken these concerns to the Town Manager?

Every Storm Runs Out of Rain Maya Angelou

On Monday, May 4, 2026 at 05:02:25 PM EDT, Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com> wrote:

Hey Chris,

None of my concerns have taken place on his watch - so there is no need for me to meet with him at all. I also believe that whatever does or does not happen with the departments lies fully on the Town Manager. The buck stops there. The Mayor knows this. I truly tried to go to him first with my concerns. The fact that he did not inform any of you OR get back to me in any way has left me no choice. I'm not trying to create a public spectacle, but the public needs to know the facts. EVERYTHING I present has come from FOIA data. It is what it is. As in my last presentation, I will merely state the facts and ask Mayor and Council to evaluate the situation. Is that not my right as a tax paying citizen? If these facts put anyone in a bad light, it's because they prove that they are not doing their jobs. That's entirely on them and out of my control. I appreciate your comments. Please let me know if you have any other questions. See ya Thursday!

Sharon



On Mon, May 4, 2026 at 4:40 PM Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com> wrote:
Sharon,

Would it not be wise to allow the new Code Director the opportunity to answer these questions via paperwork rather than putting him on the spot at a public council meeting?

Just my two cents,
Chris

Every Storm Runs Out of Rain
Maya Angelou

[Quoted text hidden]

Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>
To: Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>

Tue, May 5, 2026 at 9:10 AM

Until and unless you understand the facts of my concerns, please reserve judgment.

Sharon



[Quoted text hidden]

Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>
To: Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>
Bcc: George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>

Tue, May 5, 2026 at 9:21 AM

Until and unless you understand the facts of my concerns, please reserve judgement.

On Tue, May 5, 2026, 9:07 AM Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com> wrote:
[Quoted text hidden]

donald holden <dnldholden@yahoo.com>

Tue, May 5, 2026 at 9:28 AM

To: Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>, Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Cc: George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>, Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>, RogJenea Fisher <rogjeneafisher1@gmail.com>

This is my response to the whole situation about this 45 minute time slot she wants if she want that much time tell her put it in the paper telegram a slot in the newspaper and for your opinion Air she's not gonna hold us up for 45 minutes in a meeting just to talk about what she wants to talk about. Tell her get the newspaper sit down with the editor and send it to him and if people wanna read it, they read it they don't they don't.

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

[Quoted text hidden]

Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>

Tue, May 5, 2026 at 9:37 AM

Reply-To: Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>

To: Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

What I am speaking on is did you follow the chain of command with your concerns?

Every Storm Runs Out of Rain
Maya Angelou

[Quoted text hidden]

Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Tue, May 5, 2026 at 11:57 AM

To: Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>

Bcc: George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>

I understood what you were asking. I went to the person who had the ability to make the necessary changes to correct my concerns. I think we have talked the subject out. I am preparing a final response to the mayor's email.

[Quoted text hidden]

Sharon



Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>

Tue, May 5, 2026 at 12:06 PM

Reply-To: Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>

To: Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

As you wish.

Chris

Every Storm Runs Out of Rain
Maya Angelou

[Quoted text hidden]

Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Tue, May 5, 2026 at 3:57 PM

To: Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>

Cc: George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>, Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>, RogJenea Fisher <rogjeneafisher1@gmail.com>, reception@vslegal.net, dnldholden@yahoo.com

I acknowledge your request that I submit my concerns in written form for distribution to the Town Council. Please advise whether this requirement has been uniformly imposed upon other citizens as a condition precedent to being permitted to speak before Council. A yes-or-no response is sufficient.

As I previously stated, I do not believe I am legally obligated to submit my concerns in writing. If that is not the case, please reference where this requirement is documented. Furthermore, during our meeting on April 2, you were afforded the opportunity to question and challenge each factual issue I raised. You had no questions or contradictions at that time. These are the exact same facts I wish to share with the public. Although you took extensive notes, there is no indication that you subsequently conveyed or discussed these matters with the Council. The responsibility to keep Council informed rests with the Mayor, not with a private citizen. At that meeting, I expressly recommended that you consult both Council members and legal counsel regarding the matters I presented. Please indicate whether you did so.

With respect to the recently announced three-minute limitation on public comment, I assert that the timing and selective enforcement of this restriction are highly questionable. To my knowledge, this limitation has not been consistently applied to prior speakers, thereby establishing a longstanding precedent to the contrary. Although meeting attendance has occasionally increased, public participation during the comment period has historically been very limited. Our last meeting ran over 2 hours because there were multiple presentations that had previously been put on hold – due to bad winter weather. The sudden enforcement of this rule, under these circumstances, raises a reasonable inference that it is being used to restrict my ability to address my concerns.

This matter involves a resident exercising the right to hold municipal officials accountable for their official conduct. While such accountability may be uncomfortable, it is neither improper nor extraordinary; it is inherent in public service. I do not seek to create unnecessary public controversy

. However, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees my right to free speech. I reasonably believe that my exclusion from the agenda is based not on neutral procedural standards, but on disagreement with the substance of my anticipated remarks, which would constitute an impermissible content-based restriction.

I had hoped that these matters could be addressed internally, as discussed during our April 2 meeting. Your failure to act has left me with no reasonable alternative but to inform the public of the

factual issues I have identified. Should these facts demonstrate that mandated duties are not being fulfilled by you or members of your staff, responsibility rests with the officials charged with those duties. Public officials, by the nature of their roles, are subject to public scrutiny.

You have referenced "proper procedures" and "appropriate settings" for addressing concerns. To date, none of my concerns have been addressed. Please identify, specifically, the procedures to which you are referring and identify where they are formally documented. Are you asserting that a citizen's access to the public agenda is contingent upon prior approval by the Mayor on the content of their remarks? Are you asserting that I am required to submit my concerns to you in writing, before speaking publicly? If so, please confirm whether such requirements have been imposed upon other citizens.

You have expressed concern that public forums may become emotional or divisive. However, my prior presentation concerning the continued funding of the Alderman's Court (audio recording attached) demonstrates that I have conducted myself in a calm, factual, and professional manner. I made no personal accusations and identified no individuals by name. I simply requested that the Mayor and Council review the facts and report back to the public, which is an entirely appropriate and constructive request.

You suggested that I could raise concerns privately with the Code Inspector. As you are aware, the issues I raised predate the current inspector's tenure. Moreover, ultimate responsibility for departmental oversight lies with the Town Manager.

Finally, while you have again invited me to submit my concerns in writing, I decline to do so unless and until you can demonstrate that this requirement has been imposed consistently upon other citizens who have been granted time on the agenda. You were provided with a comprehensive explanation of my concerns during our extended April 2 meeting, and you remain fully aware of their substance. The absence of any corrective action since that time strongly suggests that you have chosen not to address them.

I have added the Town Solicitor, Mike Smith, to this email distribution. I want him to be aware of your denial of my time on the agenda, as well as the fact that you decided at this point in time to limit Public Comments to three minutes. This rule has never been enforced with other citizens – which makes it appear discriminatory and punitive. If Mr. Smith can cite legal reasons why your denial/time limit is not discriminatory and is perfectly appropriate, I would be interested to hear that justification.



Your Recording.wav

*Regards,
Sharon*



[Quoted text hidden]

Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>
To: Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Wed, May 6, 2026 at 12:33 PM

Cc: George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>, Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>, RogJenea Fisher <rogjeneafisher1@gmail.com>, reception@vslegal.net, donald holden <dnldholden@yahoo.com>

Good afternoon Sharon,
I have thought about your request and I will ask Jamie to put you on the agenda.
Can you please keep it to a concise timeframe.
Thank you
Have a great day.
[Quoted text hidden]

Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>
To: Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>

Wed, May 6, 2026 at 12:44 PM

Thank you very much. I appreciate your cooperation.

Sharon



[Quoted text hidden]

Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Wed, May 6, 2026 at 12:52 PM

To: George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com>, Chris Calio <chris.calio@yahoo.com>, dnldholden@yahoo.com, RogJenea Fisher <rogjeneafisher1@gmail.com>, reception@vslegal.net

Sharon



[Quoted text hidden]

Carlos Oliveras <coliveras178@gmail.com>
To: Sharon Ardisana <sardisana@gmail.com>

Wed, May 6, 2026 at 1:53 PM

You are welcome.

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