

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting
May 19, 2025

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Monday, May 19, 2025, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor Carlos Oliveras, President of Council Chris Calio, RogJenea Fisher, George Lodato, Jonathan Kellam, and Donald Holden. Also, in attendance were Director of Code Enforcement Ken West, Public Works Director James Foskey, Chief Robert Kracyla, Judge Ruffin, Finance Manager Melissa Cassimore, Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant, and Town Manager Jamie Smith via ZOOM. It was noted there was one Mayor & Council vacancy.

Mayor Oliveras stated a Mr. Harley Watts, resident of 101 Laurel Court, is in attendance tonight to appeal a code violation he received. Mr. Watt's stated he bought his property in 2015, and he received a code violation from the town not allowing indoor furniture on an outside patio. He explained he likes to be comfortable, and he is willing to put a tarp over the furniture for Mayor & Council's consideration. Mayor Oliveras stated he will address the violation with Director of Code Enforcement West and he will follow up with Mr. Watts.

Mayor Oliveras stated Mr. Don D'Aquila is in attendance tonight to present on Business Licenses. Mr. D'Aquila stated he is attending tonight to address the Mayor & Council of his concerns regarding the business license fees and vending coin operating machines. Mr. D'Aquila provided handouts to Mayor & Council for their review. He stated he submitted a FOIA request, requesting all the business licenses within the town, which the town complied with. He stated his Wash Zone is charged an additional per assessment unit fee of \$1,260.00 along with the town business license fee. He stated his business provides a service not a vending service and he has been in front of Mayor & Council prior and has not received any consideration. Mr. D'Aquila stated the additional per unit fee is only associated with car washes and laundromat services. He then listed several different types of business that offer services, but an additional fee is not applied to them. He stated Bargain Bills receives a piggyback fee where they have 58 units inside, a restaurant, a convenient store, a fruit cup vendor, 7 vendors along the front, 2 businesses outback, and 96 tables according to an outdoor person. He advised Bargain Bills is currently paying \$1,300 in fees, while the town should be collecting \$24,900 in fees if counting all the business represented out there. He stated the additional per unit fee should be rescinded due to his business providing a service not a vending service prior to the FY 2026 Budget. Councilman Kellam inquired if he believed everyone who sets up at Bargain Bills should have a business license. Mr. D'Aquila stated yes, anyone who comes into town should be required to get a business license. After a brief discussion, the Mayor & Council thanked Mr. D'Aquila for his time and his presentation.

The Mayor & Council Regular and Closed Session Minutes of April 19, 2025, and May 12, 2025, were presented for review. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the regular and closed session minutes of April 19, 2025, and May 12, 2025. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

The April 2025 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Public Works Director Foskey stated the town received minor damages from the storm on Friday evening including tree removal and debris.
- Director of Code Enforcement West stated he had no additions to his report.

Mayor Oliveras inquired if the town had a policy pertaining portable toilets. Director of Code Enforcement West stated the Mayor & Council can approve portable toilets with special permission. Councilman Kellam inquired if there was a time limit. Director of Code Enforcement West stated he would need to review the code book.

Councilman Lodato stated code sent out 38 violation notices and inquired how the violation is rectified and recorded. Director of Code Enforcement West stated the violator has 7 days to make the correction and if not completed within the 7 days an outside contractor, then completes the work.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the violations could be listed on the town's website for general information. Town Manager Smith stated per FOIA any active/open case criminal or non-criminal is not permissible information.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the case is closed could it be posted on the website. Town Manager Smith stated she would need to talk to the attorney for his recommendation.

- Judge Ruffin stated she had no additions to her report.
- Finance Manager Cassimore stated she had no additions to her report.
- Chief Kracyla stated the Help Initiative are coordinating Stadium Lighting at Hollybrook and Little Creek. He thanked Captain Bryan in organizing the Little League Parade. He stated he and Mayor Oliveras attended the End Community Violence Meeting where Mrs. Amy Handy is a Board Member.

Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the April Department Head Reports as presented. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Town Manager Smith provided a 4th of July Update. She stated the celebration will take place on Friday, July 4, 2025, at Janosik Park. The town has almost received \$10,000's in firework donations where the town pays a portion of the \$22,000 cost. She stated food vendors and non-food vendors applications have been received. The town is awaiting payment of a few vendors in order to secure their spot. She advised Prayer Breakfast tickets will be at town hall once they become available.

Town Manager Smith provided an update on Infrastructure Repair Funding. Town Manager Smith stated the town has had major sewer/water repairs on state-maintained roads. She advised the town has received \$50,000 in funding with the help of Senator Richardson and State Representative Dukes. She advised West Street has two more repairs needed and the town wanted to secure funding prior to work.

Town Manager Smith stated the Mayor & Council will be holding two meetings in the month of June. The first meeting will be Monday, June 2, 2025, a public hearing for the FY 2026 Budget and the second meeting will be on Monday, June 16, 2025.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the 2.6% credit card fee charge is associated with e-checks and debit cards. Finance Manager Cassimore stated the town doesn't accept e-checks and the 2.6% fee applies to any cards. The town also takes cash, check, and money orders with no fee associated.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the Planning & Zoning Meetings are open to the public. Director of Code Enforcement West stated yes, they will meet on the second Wednesday of the month on an as needed basis.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the town has looked into providing no-interest loans to residents for a 3-to-4-year period pertaining sidewalk repairs. Town Manager Smith stated the town did this several years ago, and Mayor & Council can discuss this in the budget process to see if it's financially feasible.

Councilwoman Fisher stated the Open Mic Night held this past Saturday was well attended and thanked Mr. Little with his efforts.

Councilman Lodato stated the Open Mic Night was well attended. He stated events around town need to be better communicated with the residents.

Councilman Lodato thanked Public Works staff for their clean-up around town this past Friday.

Councilman Kellam stated the Laurel High School Track & Field team attended states this past Friday and Saturday where they represented the town well. Mayor Oliveras stated the team should be recognized at a Mayor & Council Meeting. Councilman Kellam stated he will contact Coach David King.

Mayor Oliveras congratulated Councilman Kellam and Councilman Holden on there re-election.

Mayor Oliveras congratulated Councilwoman Fisher on her election.

Mr. Nick Little thanked everyone for the kind words pertaining the Open Mic Event. He stated 47 people attended and there was a great representation of organizations. The next Open Mic Event will be published in the Laurel Star.

Mr. Little stated Mrs. Danielle, Kylee Robinsons, mom inquired if a rock garden could be located in town for victims.

Mr. Little stated the Boys & Girls Club installed their new playground this past Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. He stated an organization named Kaboom created the playground.

Mr. Little inquired if portable toilets can be placed at Tidewater Park and Roger C. Fisher Park.

Mr. Little stated he and Mayor Oliveras painted the basketball lines at the Webb Avenue Courts and inquired if the North Laurel Courts could be painted as they have no lines.

Mayor Oliveras stated Mothers for Mothers is a women rally and they asked if they could work with Councilwoman Fisher.

Town Manager Smith stated portable toilets will be located at Roger C. Fisher Park and Tidewater Park shortly. The town has reached out to a different company.

Town Manager Smith stated the North Laurel Basketball Courts are not town property and you would need to reach out to the Laurel Lions Club.

Mrs. Amy Handy, from Operation West Laurel (O.W.L) stated on Saturday, May 31, 2025, a West Laurel Community Clean Up Day from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. will be held. The clean-up will start at New Zion Church and finish at Webb Avenue where lunch will be held at the courts. The target area will include the following streets: Townsend, West 6th, West 7th, Center, 8th St, Elm, Belle, Webb, Crockett, Gibson, & Greene. She advised she needs to talk to Director of Public Works Foskey pertaining trash removal.

Mrs. Handy, from O.W.L. stated Ballin For God/End Community Violence will be held on Saturday, June 7, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Dunbar Courts. She stated Mayor & Council has attended in the past to open the event.

Mrs. Handy, from O.W.L. stated a Summer Job Youth Shadowing Stipend Program will begin on Monday, June 16, 2025. This program will allow high school students an opportunity to learn about a job once a week. She advised she is reaching out to the town to see if they would be interested in participating in this program.

Mr. Dean Kramer, resident of 238 W. 8th Street, addressed his concern pertaining Wolfe Street and W. 8th Street for having more One-Way signage and a consideration of speed bumps to slow traffic down.

Mr. Kramer, resident of 238 W. 8th Street, stated the following blighted properties within the town 235 & 229 Market Street across from Linkbank, 498 Central Avenue, and 808 West Street.

Mr. Kramer, resident of 238 W. 8th Street, inquired about an update on the developments proposed on Discount Land Road and on Rt. 9 and Rt. 13. Town Manager Smith stated both developers are working with state agencies in receiving their permits in order to get final approval from the town.

Mr. Watts, resident of 101 Laurel Court, inquired if the town is responsible for citing trash violations within Laurel Court. Councilman Holden recommended for Mr. Watt's to contact the management and the H.O.A.

Mr. D'Aquila stated he has offered his assistance and is willing to post events on his sign.

Mayor Oliveras read a statement from a Mr. Frank Littleton pertaining children accessing Tidewater Park. Mr. Littleton recommended more signage, crosswalks, and reduced speed limits along Poplar Street and Central Avenue. Town Manager Smith stated Central Avenue and a portion of Poplar Street are state maintained roads. She advised a traffic study would need to be completed prior to any changes and the town would be responsible for maintaining the crosswalks.

Mr. Jim LaRue, resident of 204 E. 6th Street, stated Mr. D'Aquila's statements are fair pertaining to the additional unit fee. He stated contractors and vendors acquiring licenses and permits in the town would be an excellent revenue source.

Mr. LaRue, followed up on Councilman Lodato's comments and stated the Globe Building Property owner requested a variance from the Board of Adjustment to convert to residential only from commercial to residential.

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

Regular Session Recessed at 8:30 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened at 10:27 p.m.

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With there being no further business, Councilman Holden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary