

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting Minutes
June 15, 2026

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Monday, June 15, 2026, 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 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 there was one vacancy on Mayor & Council.

Mayor Oliveras presented a Recognition Ceremony celebrating Town Manager Jamie Smith's milestone of "30 Years of Service." The following tributes were presented to Town Manager Smith on behalf of her service a tribute by former Mayor Shwed, a state tribute by Senator Richardson, and a House of Representative tribute by Representative Dukes. Town Manager Smith thanked all her town staff, residents, and family members who attended the ceremony.

Mayor Oliveras stated the purpose of the Public Hearing is to listen to the presentation regarding the Sussex County Community Development Block Grant Funding. Mr. Brandon Hamilton from the Sussex Community Development Office was in attendance. The funding comes from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, (HUD), and is allocated to Sussex and Kent County and the Delaware State Housing Authority. This grant year, there's approximately \$3 million that will be awarded to Kent and Sussex counties on a competitive basis. The purpose of the CDBG Funding is to assist households on low to moderate income levels for housing projects. Mr. Hamilton explained a public hearing must be held to allow an opportunity explain the funding and to give any updates to the Mayor & Council and to town citizens. He stated eligible activities include housing rehabilitation, sewer and water hookups, demolition, and infrastructure projects. The projects will benefit persons at low and lower income, as defined as households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income for Sussex County set by HUD. He stated the maximum incomes for the 2026 Fiscal year pertaining the following households include: are a single person household max income \$57,802, a two-person household max income will be \$66,050 and a four-person household would be \$82,500. The majority of funding is used for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation. Housing rehabs include roofing, doors, windows, electrical and plumbing upgrades, as well as energy upgrades. The home must be owner-occupied and it must be the owner's primary residence. The home must be insured, and their county taxes and utilities must be current. When a rehab project occurs a lien is required, to put on the property in order to protect the funding for any work less than \$5,000 is no lien, for any work between \$5,000 to \$15,000 is a five-year lien, and for any work between \$15,000 to \$40,000 is a 10-year lien. In the last 3 years the town has received \$390,000, which assisted 26 households. There are currently 18 houses on the waiting list. He stated applications are available either at their office or online at Sussex County website. He stated residents who are in immediate need of a small window or floor unit air conditioners to contact them at 302-855-7777. Mr. Hamilton inquired if Mayor & Council or citizens had any questions pertaining the funding.

Chief Kracyla presented the Police Officer Swearing-In Ceremony to Patrolman Gavin Manning.

Mayor Oliveras presented a Proclamation honoring Mrs. Joyce Sessom's, for her 30 years of education and social work within the community.

Town Manager Smith stated the duties of the Board of Assessment are to meet once a year to review the Assessment List provided by Sussex County. Once they review a copy of Sussex County's Assessment List, the Mayor & Council adopts the list in July, and a Court of Appeals is held in August. The Court of Appeals allows residents to appeal their town's tax assessment where all appeals go through Sussex County. Mayor Oliveras recommended for appointment Mrs. Ann Davis and Mr. Jeff Hill. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the two new Board of Assessment Appointments for Mrs. Ann Davis and Mr. Jeff Hill. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

The Mayor & Council Regular and Closed Session Minutes of May 11, 2026, May 18, 2026, and June 1, 2026, were presented for review. Councilman Lodato stated the following amendments need to be corrected on May 18, 2026, meeting minutes as what was written in the minutes versus the audio recording. He advised per the audio recording he 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. He advised per the audio recording he made a motion for Mayor and Council to further investigate what revenue stream would be if the JP Court replaced the Alderman's Court. He stated he is not saying to replace the court but to investigate alternatives. Councilman Lodato stated per the audio you can clearly hear Councilman Kellam second the motion with no voices opposing until Mayor Oliveras asked for a count. After a pause, a mixed count was given with Councilman Kellam stating we should look into the facts and not speculation. Councilman Lodato also stated an additional amendment pertaining the motion of the Alderman Court should read Councilpersons President of Council Calio, Councilwoman Fisher, Councilman Holden, and Mayor Oliveras opposed instead of proposing. Councilman Lodato stated to ensure the record is clear he proposed Mayor & Council to reconsider these two separate motions. President of Council Calio stated the proposed motions can be re-considered tonight. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the May 11, 2026, May 18, 2026, and the June 1, 2026, as presented with the proposed amendments provided above pertaining to the May 18, 2026. Councilwoman Fisher seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

The May 2026 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Public Works Director Foskey stated the Transite Main Replacement on 8th Street is completed. The N. Poplar Water Tower is offline this week due to cleaning and maintenance and well inspections at Rt. 13 were completed with a potential well cleaning needed.

- Director of Code Enforcement Hogg stated there were 2 vehicles written for expired/no tags, 15 permits totaling \$16,974.08, 2 new home permits, 23 work orders for grass, 4 stop work orders, and 96 new cases, including 53 grass and 10 housing violations.
- Judge Mirro stated he had no additions or changes to his report. He congratulated Town Manager Smith on her milestone of 30 Years of Service.
- Finance Manager Naselli stated the town was without internet or phone service today with cash or check payments still being accepted. She congratulated Town Manager Smith on her milestone of 30 Years of Service.
- Chief Kracyla stated the police department handled a total of 364 complaints/calls for service last month. He stated US Marshall, Jim Weldin visited the p.d. and went on a ride along with Cpl. Howard. They continue to meet with Severn Management Group over issues in Little Creek and Hollybrook. He advised they conducted CVSA or Voice Stress Analysis Operator interviews where two operators have been selected and will be attending training shortly. He attended a course pertaining to Drone Assessment and Response and he's looking to secure grant funding to purchase a drone. The Back the Blue Caravan stopped at the p.d. He stated Block Parties at Little Creek are occurring frequently and they have partnered with state agencies for enforcement.
- Town Manager Smith stated Wawa is scheduled to submit their Final Site Plan to P&Z in July. Their tentatively scheduled to break ground in September and October. She stated the Main Street Assessment was held on June 2, 2026, and June 3, 2026, where business owners, town officials, and residents were invited. The assessment will be provided in approximately six months. She stated the Delaware Historical Society will be hosting a Juneteenth Celebration at Jason Beach, Trap Pond State Park on Friday, June 19, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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

Mayor Oliveras presented the 2nd Reading of Ordinance 2026-2, Amending Chapter 69, Curfew. Town Manager Smith stated they're recommending amending Chapter 69 Section 2. Curfew for Juveniles to read 18 years old, Section 6. Enforcement Procedures, and Section 7. Violations and Penalties. She stated this ordinance will go into effect July 1, 2026. Councilman Kellam made a motion to accept the 2nd and Final Reading of Ordinance 2026-2. Councilwoman Fisher seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Mayor Oliveras presented the 2nd Reading of Ordinance 2026-3, Amending Chapter 157, Utility Construction and Repair. Town Manager Smith stated this amendment to Chapter 157, General

Conditions, Section GC, Subsection 2, Permit, Fees, and notices. She advised this ordinance will go into effect June 16, 2026. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the 2nd and Final Reading of Ordinance 2026-3. Councilman Kellam 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. Councilman Lodato made a motion for Mayor & Council to review the wording used within the policy and to allow more of an opportunity for Mayor & Council to discuss the policy. Councilman Lodato stated he is in support of having procedures that keep meetings orderly and productive. He is concerned with the overall tone of the document with the policy reading as a list of restrictions and enforcement mechanisms. Councilman Lodato proposes Mayor & Council to revise the language, so it portrays that public participation is valued and welcomed which will allow residents to feel that the town wants to hear from them rather than regulating them. Please find attached Councilman Lodato's proposed recommendations to Mayor & Council. (**ATTACH RECOMENDATIONS**). After a brief discussion, President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the Public Participation Policy as written. Councilwoman Fisher seconded the motion. Vote was 5-1, with Councilman Lodato opposing and with one vacancy.

Mayor Oliveras presented the Adoption FY2027 Budget. Town Manager Smith stated a public hearing pertaining the FY2027 Budget was held on Monday, June 1, 2026, at Laurel Town Hall, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Copies of the FY2027 Budget were made available at Laurel Town Hall and online at www.townoflaurel.net. Councilman Lodato stated he would not be accepting the budget due to the following reasons:

(1.) The Need for Budget versus Actual Information:

Councilman Lodato stated they were not provided with prior year budget versus actual information. He advised this is needed to determine if the proposed figures are reasonable and supported by past financial performance.

(2.) Public Access to Budget Committee Meetings:

Councilman Lodato stated the Budget Committee Meetings were held without providing the public to attend. He advised the purpose of public notices is not only to comply with legal requirements but to ensure residents have the opportunity to ask questions, understand

the budget process, and to participate in meaningful decisions that affect the community. He stated Town Manager Smith posted the notice at Town Hall. He questioned why this posting was not posted on the town website just as other agenda meetings are and why the notice can't be posted in other highly visible public locations. Councilman Lodato stated if the town values public participation they should make every effort ensuring residents are aware of meetings that impact the towns finances and future.

(3.) Tracking and Classification of Revenue:

Councilman Lodato stated he is concerned that some of the budget information is not being clearly tracked in the system. He provided an example; such as, delinquent vacant property and code violations fee's are added to real estate tax bills as revenue rather than credited back to the appropriate department once the revenue is collected. He stated recording these amounts as real estate tax revenue does not provide a clear or accurate account of the type of revenue being collected.

President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the FY2027 Budget as presented. Councilwoman Fisher seconded the motion. Vote was 5-1, with Councilman Lodato opposing and with one vacancy.

Mayor Oliveras presented Resolution 2026-4 pertaining to the FY2027 Rates & Fee's. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept Resolution 2026-4. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Town Manager Smith presented the Citizen Participation Certificate of Assurance in regards to the CDBG Application. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the Citizen Participation Certificate of Assurance. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Town Manager Smith presented Resolution 2026-5, for the CDBG Application. The resolution assumes the Town of Laurel recognizes the importance of fair housing for the citizens of Laurel and where the Town of Laurel Supports the goals of the Federal Fair Housing. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept Resolution 2026-5. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

Town Manager Smith presented Resolution 2026-6 endorsing the project to be submitted to the Delaware State Housing Authority for funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development authorizing Todd F. Lawson, Sussex County Administrator, to submit application for CDBG Funding. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept Resolution 2026-6. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with one vacancy.

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Town Manager Smith presented a 4th of July Update. She stated the Laurel Ministerial Association will be holding a Prayer's Breakfast on Saturday, July 4, 2026, at Abbott's beginning at 8:00 a.m. Tickets are available at Laurel Town Hall if interested. The Laurel Historical Society will be hosting Independence & Ice Cream Event on Saturday, July 4, 2026, at Hitchen's Homestead from 7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. She stated the town has raised the money towards the firework display and an advertisement will be listed in the Laurel STAR to recognize the donors.

Councilwoman Fisher congratulated Town Manager Smith on her milestone of 30 Years of Service. She stated she is working on scheduling youth activity meetings for summer activities, and she thanked Mrs. Sessom for being a mentor. She stated there will be Juneteenth Event held on Saturday, June 20, 2026, at Paul Laurence Dunbar Community Building from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Councilman Lodato stated a Café Night will be held at Connection Church on Sunday, July 19, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. where a collection of pre-packaged snacks will be collected on behalf Operation West Laurel.

Councilman Lodato stated he was hoping to present the Welcome to Laurel Brochure to Mayor & Council tonight in order it for it to be ready for the Broad Creek Bash but the attorney is still reviewing.

Councilman Lodato congratulated Town Manager Smith on behalf of her milestone of 30 Years of Service.

Councilman Lodato made a motion if Mayor & Council would investigate into Mrs. Ardisana's concerns that she raised regarding the vacant house ordinance and cost reporting and report their findings back to Council and the residents.

Councilman Kellam stated the town has policy and procedures that they must go through and the town needs to be cautious without adding more onto our constituents.

Town Manager Smith stated the town has enforced the Vacant House Ordinance for several years now and that she stands behind her staff on how it's enforced and she can provide the information to Mayor & Council for their review.

Councilman Lodato made a motion Mayor & Council review and evaluate the available options regarding the future operation of the Alderman's Court, including its financial impact on the Town, so that any future decisions can be based on accurate information and facts.

President of Council Calio stated the Alderman Court is generated by court cases and court is losing revenue due to less cases.

Councilman Lodato's motion pertaining if the Mayor & Council would review and evaluate the available options regarding the future operation of the Alderman's Court, including its financial impact on the Town, so that any future decisions can be based on accurate information and facts failed due to the lack of second and was not considered by Council.

President of Council Calio congratulated Town Manager Smith for her milestone of 30 Years of Service and thanked her for all what she does for the town.

Councilman Kellam congratulated Town Manager Smith for her milestone of 30 Years of Service and encouraged everyone to work for the betterment of the town.

Councilman Holden congratulated Town Manager Smith for her milestone of 30 Years of Service.

Mayor Oliveras stated there were the following community events held this past weekend:

- Anti-Gun Violence Event.
- Laurel Boys & Girls Club "Music in the Park."
- Ballin for God Basketball Tournament.
- Laurel Public Library Block Party.
- Ballin' For God Basketball Tournament.
- Laurel Family Day.

Mayor Oliveras stated he has fielded several phone calls in the past few weeks regarding the concerns raised in last month's Mayor & Council Meeting. He stated residents are perceiving the following misconceptions that the town has had failed audits, the town has no idea where the money is going, and that no actions were taken by the Mayor. He advised a follow-up email was provided regarding the concerns raised providing the situation. He stated action took place and to categorize it as no action is intellectually dishonest and unfair just because the findings were not what you were expecting. He stated he sent an email twelve days prior to May 18, 2026, Mayor & Council Meeting. He explained these misconceptions are causing the town to portray a bad image.

Mr. Tony Windsor, from the Laurel Star stated he typically uses the phrase no action was taken when closing an article when there was no formal action. He explained he wanted to make sure there was no mis-quoting information on his end.

Mrs. Sharon Ardisana, resident of Laurel, De, stated she has never received an email from April 2, 2026, through April 20, 2026, when she spoke with Mayor Oliveras. She requested if Mayor Oliveras could provide the email. Mayor Oliveras stated the email was sent on May 2, 2026. She encouraged everyone to go back and listen to the audio as this will provide everyone a better understanding of what occurred. She stated the issue with the audit was not about pass or fail and the issue is the audit is three years behind in October due to someone passing away. She advised it may take some amount of months to recover but it does not take two and a half years to recover to provide information to the auditors in order to be compliant with the town charter. She stated

audits are supposed to be completed within 90 days of the end of the fiscal year. She stated you cannot run a town when you don't have current audited data. She addressed her concern regarding the financial report only reporting limited revenues. She stated per the charter they must report all revenues for the month. She verified with Mayor Oliveras on April 2, 2026, that Mayor & Council receive only the financial report every month. She stated Mayor & Council cannot possibly know the financial health of the town without looking at budgeted versus actuals every month without looking at the town's bank account statements and check registry. She stated you have one person in charge of a \$7 million budget with no oversight. She advised the finance report submitted tonight is the same as last month without meeting the charter requirements. She advised no one is willing to change as it's what the town has always done, which is not the right answer and the town can always improve.

Mrs. Ardisana stated she has been misquoted in the previous two sets of Mayor & Council Minutes with items being left out and she is providing a letter to Mayor Oliveras to make the following corrections. The one concern she addressed was regarding the May 18, 2026, Mayor & Council Meeting. She stated that she was quoted that she was denied a place on the agenda by Mayor Oliveras, requesting 45 minutes originally, with a second request of 20 minutes, which she was allotted. She stated that's not what she said, and that's not what occurred. She stated she contacted Mayor Oliveras in which she was denied. She considered 45 minutes maybe too long and inquired for 20 minutes, in which she was denied again. She stated she was not added to the agenda until after a third email was sent discussing her First Amendment rights. She stated Mayor Oliveras knew what she was going to address and he had not even discussed her concerns from April 2, 2026, with Mayor & Council. She stated it wasn't until she addressed that her First Amendment rights were being violated, and copied the town solicitor that she was added to the agenda the next morning. She explained this is what it took for her to get 20 minutes to address her concerns, which she stated are 100% valid and 100% based on FOIA data.

She stated last month Mayor Oliveras asked her to provide a copy of her presentation from last month. She provided a transcript from the audio that is word for word in what she presented. She requested if this could be added as an attachment to the minutes. Secondly, she requested to include the attachment of the email exchange that went back and forth between Mayor Oliveras and herself with the council copied that illustrates she was told not to embarrass anybody on Mayor Oliveras team. She stated they're public officials, they're in the public eye, and they have to be available. She stated she has not criticized anybody according to her transcripts and that she points out the data, points out the charter that's not being met, and the ordinance that's not being met. She is requesting if this 15-page email exchange be part of the record and be an attachment to the minutes.

Councilman Kellam stated that you sent me the audio and the conversations you had with Mayor Oliveras and he explained Mayor Oliveras followed-up with Mrs. Ardisana because he reached out to Mayor Oliveras to verify.

Mrs. Ardisana stated that was May 7, 2026, and she met with him on April 2, 2026, to address her concerns. She stated when Mayor Oliveras left the meeting he stated that she had opened up his eyes and to please get back up with her as she did not want to stand up in a public meeting.

She advised Mayor Oliveras to contact the Mayor & Council and the town attorney to see if the concerns she was addressing were valid. She stated this is the best she could do, to avoid this situation that we're in now, because Mayor Oliveras did not act and she was forced to bring it up in a public sector.

Mrs. Ardisana requested if Mayor Oliveras will send the email where he addressed her issues that were raised on April 2, 2026, Meeting and not the email on May 7, 2026, regarding where she asked to be on the agenda. She stated she has no emails from Mayor Oliveras email from April 2, 2026, when she told Mayor Oliveras she was going to have to present it to the public if nothing was going to be done.

Mrs. Laina Betts, resides outside town limits, and she also wanted to discuss the May 18, 2026 Mayor & Council Minutes. She advised she doesn't know how the minutes are made, but looking back at the audio, she wanted to check to make sure that she was right. The mayor spoke about the Alderman Courts benefits. She requested at last months meeting, asking Mayor & Council to review the numbers, because the audio states that the Alderman Court generated \$81,677.13 in revenue in collecting court and court security costs, that would have made up 49% of the entire audit report revenue, in which she questioned. When reviewing the math, the actual revenue from the court security and court calls were \$43,930.49 and the fines were 122,000. She commented about other Alderman Courts in our state, which are Newark, Newport, Kent County has none, Dewey, Bethany, Rehoboth, and Laurel. She stated the reason that Dewey Beach and Rehoboth and Laurel have an Alderman's Court is because they process \$2 million worth of revenue with parking meters that the town doesn't have. She doesn't see why the town needs to do away with the Alderman's Court but recommending in looking at other options like consolidating to a one day to decrease overhead. She advised that's how the JP court and the other Alderman Courts work. Mrs. Betts thanked Town Manager Smith for her 30 years of service. She thanked Chief Krcyla for building the relationships that we have to keep our town safe, and she apologized that he has to sit here when others make unethical comments about helping the court by writing more tickets.

Mrs. Cheryl Barber, resident of Gibson Avenue, applauded Chief Krcyla and his officers for the Block Parties that have been occurring at Little Creek on weekends.

Mrs. Barber, resident of Gibson Avenue, applauded Councilman Kellam and town staff for assisting her through the permit process.

Mrs. Ann Davis, resident of Pine Street, verified the Hitchen's Homestead will be hosting a 4th of July Ice Cream & Cake Social beginning at 7:30 p.m.

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

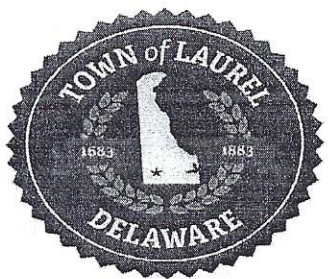
Meeting Adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary



Town of LAUREL DELAWARE

THE TOWN OF LAUREL PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY

I. PURPOSE:

- 1) a. These rules shall govern the time, place, and manner for public comment during all public meetings for the Town Of Laurel.

II. PROCEDURES:

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.

- a. ~~Each speaker will be asked to provide their name and address on a sign-up sheet, which will be available at the podium.~~
- 2) b. 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.
- 3) c. 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 expired. Generally, 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 period. Based on the number of requests for public comment the presiding officer of Council may grant a speaker, at a maximum, 2 additional minutes.
- d. The presiding officer of Council will remind members of the public to speak clearly into the podium microphone, to address officials at the front of the

room rather than audience members behind them and to speak only when at the podium, unless previously authorized by the Mayor or the presiding officer of Council.

4) e. After a person is recognized and notified their allotted time to speak has begun, they are not to be interrupted except by the Mayor or the presiding officer of Council whose purpose is to enforce these policies. At the discretion of the Mayor or the presiding officer of Council, speakers may be asked to refrain from further comment if they continue to speak beyond their allotted time, digress from comments or questions related to Town business or jurisdiction, or if the speaker becomes so willfully and seriously disruptive as to prevent Council from accomplishing its business in a reasonable manner.

5) f. The Mayor or the presiding officer may choose to respond to questions or issues raised by a speaker. However, responses made by the Mayor or the presiding officer of Council shall not indicate the position of Council as a body.

6) g. To the extent possible, public comment shall be in person. An individual may submit a written statement in lieu of or in addition to verbal comments; however, public comment may not be submitted through the use of an electronic means of communication while the meeting is in session, unless the public body is required, by law, to hold the meeting virtually.

7) h. It shall be unlawful for any person in the audience at a public meeting to do any of the following ... (1) Engage in disorderly, disruptive, disturbing, delaying or boisterous conduct, such as, but not limited to, handclapping, stomping of feet, whistling, making noise, use of profane language or obscene gestures, yelling or similar demonstrations, which conduct substantially interrupts, delays, or disturbs the peace and good order of the proceedings of the public meeting.

8)

III. GUIDANCE FOR THE PUBLIC:

- a. The order of business at each regular meeting of the Mayor & City Council shall be as follows:

Call to Order
Invocation
Pledge of Allegiance
Public Hearings (if applicable)
Presentations (if applicable)
Approval of Minutes
Department Head Reports
Old Business
New Business

Mayor and Council Comments
Citizens Comments
Executive Session
Adjournment

The order of business may be altered at the discretion of the Mayor or the presiding officer of Council.

- b. Once you are called forward to the podium, please state your name and address for the record.
- c. Remember to speak clearly and directly into the microphone.
- d. While not required, it is encouraged that statements and questions be prepared in advance of the meeting.
- e. Please note, the public body is not required to respond to your remarks during the regular meeting.

Presented for approval May 18, 2026
Approved:



Public Comment Policy, something they cannot argue with:

Mayor, Sir, If we had got together as a council to discuss this new policy, I would not need to be doing this tonight.

I support having procedures that keep meetings orderly and productive. My concern is not with the existence of rules. My concern is with the overall tone of the document. As written, the policy reads primarily as a list of restrictions and enforcement mechanisms. I would encourage Council to revise the language so that it begins by affirming that public participation is valued and welcomed. Residents should leave with the impression that the Town wants to hear from them, not merely regulate them

1. "These rules shall govern the time, place, and manner for public comment during all public meetings for the Town of Laurel."

-The very first thing residents read is that the purpose is to "govern" public comment.

There is no statement that:

- Public participation is valued.
- Residents are encouraged to participate.
- Public input helps inform decision-making.

It begins with control rather than engagement.

Suggestion: "The Town of Laurel values public participation and encourages residents, taxpayers, business owners, and stakeholders to share their perspectives on matters affecting the community. These guidelines are intended to provide a fair, respectful, and orderly process for public comment while allowing Council to conduct Town business efficiently."

Talking Point "My concern isn't with having procedures. My concern is that the opening paragraph tells residents how they will be regulated before it tells them they are **welcome**."

2 (a) is not needed since (b) already is asking them to come forward to the podium after being recognized. "Provide their name and address"

Talking Point For safety purposes Street addresses should not be published. I would be satisfied with speaker stating they are a resident of Laurel.

3. "Generally, the total period available for public comment during a meeting may not exceed 30 minutes." -The emphasis is on limiting comments rather than ensuring everyone has an opportunity to speak.

Suggestion: "To provide an opportunity for all interested individuals to be heard while ensuring the meeting agenda can be completed, public comment periods will generally be limited to 30 minutes. It should also state the council reserves the right by majority vote to extend the public comment time as needed."

Talking Point "The existing language emphasizes the restriction. The alternative language emphasizes the reason for the restriction."

4. "Speakers may be asked to refrain from further comment if they... digress from comments or questions related to Town business or jurisdiction..."

-The phrase "asked to refrain from further comment" sounds disciplinary.

It also gives broad discretion without explaining what is expected.

Suggestion: "Speakers are encouraged to focus their comments on matters affecting the Town and issues within the Town's authority."

Talking Point "One version tells residents what they shouldn't do. The other tells residents what is helpful and expected."

5. "The Mayor or the presiding officer may choose to respond to questions or issues raised by a speaker."

-Residents may read this as:

"We may answer you, or we may not."

Even if that's legally accurate, it can feel dismissive.

Suggestion "Questions and concerns raised during public comment may be addressed during the meeting or referred to Town staff for appropriate follow-up."

Talking Point "Residents understand that every question can't be answered immediately, but they appreciate knowing their concerns won't simply disappear."

6. "Public comment through electronic means"

Talking Point As far as I am aware and please correct me if I am wrong, we are required by law to hold our town meeting virtually through zoom. Delaware code title 29 state government 10006A

(a) Member attending a meeting through the use of an electronic means of communication is a reasonable modification or reasonable accommodation is considered present for all purposes as if the member is physically attended, including for quorum in voting

(b) at the discretion of the chair or presiding officer, a public body may allow the public to monitor or provide public comment through the use of an electronic means of communication at any meeting

7. "It shall be unlawful for any person in the audience"

-This is the strongest example of poor tone.

Most readers are not lawyers. When they read:

"It shall be unlawful...it immediately creates an enforcement-oriented tone.

The policy moves from participation to punishment.

(Has the council discussed with Chief regarding the enforcement of any of this? I feel that they should have a say if they're going to be expected to enforce these.)

Suggestion "To maintain a productive, orderly, and respectful meeting environment, all participants, including the Mayor, Council members, Town staff, and members of the public, shall conduct themselves in a manner that promotes civil discourse and shall refrain from behavior that substantially disrupts, delays, or interferes with the proceedings. Mutual respect and professionalism are expected at all times. The prohibited behaviors can remain listed afterward.

Talking Point "The standard remains exactly the same, but the tone changes from threatening enforcement to encouraging respectful participation."

8. I feel the largest omission in the document is **the welcome**.

Talking Point "What stands out to me is not what the policy says—it's what it doesn't say. There is no statement anywhere that the Town welcomes public participation or values citizen input."