

The Town of Laurel  
Mayor & Council Meeting  
July 17, 2023

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Monday, July 17, 2023, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor John Shwed, President of Council Chris Calio, Council Members Carlos Oliveras, Cheryl Martin via ZOOM, Jonathan Kellam, and Donald Holden. Also, in attendance were Director of Code Enforcement Ken West, Public Works Director James Foskey, Chief Dan Wright, Judge Ruffin, Finance Manager Mary Introcaso, Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant, and Town Manager Jamie Smith. It was noted that Councilwoman Robin Fisher-Cornish was absent.

The Mayor & Council Regular Session and Closed Session Minutes of June 20, 2023, were presented for review and adoption. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the minutes of June 20, 2023. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish absent.

The June 2023 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Director of Code Enforcement West stated both storage facilities will be issued there permits this week.
- Public Works Director Foskey stated on August 14, 2023, the town will have received the notice pertaining the Watermain and Transite Replacement Phase III, with work scheduled to begin in September.
- Chief Wright stated the department handled 362 complaints last month. Chief Wright presented a promotion ceremony to Patrolman First Class Porter.
- Judge Ruffin stated she had no additions to her report.
- Finance Manager Introcaso stated Mayor & Council will have a more finalized and completed report next month for review due to it being July's Report.
- Town Manager Smith advised the town was a recipient of a Community Reinvestment Fund of \$274,200 pertaining sewer and water main replacement and smoke testing awarded by Senator Richardson and State Representative Dukes. Town Manager Smith thanked Mrs. Amy Handy and a group of young men for cleaning-up trash along their community.

Mrs. Laura Mackey, resident of West Sixth Street, inquired about the 30% increase on taxes. Town Manager Smith advised the town has three federal mandate projects that the town must comply with, the increasing cost of infrastructure, water tower maintenance, a decrease in septic receiving and the hire of two additional police officers went into account of raising taxes.

Councilman Oliveras inquired if the town could amend the 30% tax increase with a proposed 10% tax increase yearly. Town Manager Smith advised no; we would not have a balance budget.

President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the June 2023 Department Head Reports. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish absent.

Mayor Shwed advised the town attorney recommended the town to read a following statement pertaining public comment. The statement includes: The Town of Laurel's Mayor & Council informs that all intended speakers can make a comment and "may add a time limit if needed." However, their comments must be relevant to a topic under consideration; they must not be personally derogatory or demeaning or contemptuous; that if the comments get into that area the speaker will be warned to discontinue that course of comment and if he/she persists they will be immediately shut down from making further comment. If they don't agree they are subject to removal from the proceedings.

Mayor Shwed advised the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of Ordinance 2022-5 pertaining Chapter 49 Animals, Article III Dangerous Animals will be postponed until a full quorum is in attendance.

Mayor Shwed gave an update and a report pertaining speed bumps. Mayor Shwed advised he met with Mrs. Handy, Town Manager Smith, and Chief Wright on Tuesday, July 11, 2023. Mrs. Handy is leading an effort to improve her environment throughout her neighborhood. They're proposing to install speed bumps on West Seventh Street and West Sixth Street due to excessive speeding. Mayor Shwed advised West Sixth Street is a state-maintained road and the town will need to get state approval. Town Manager Smith proposed the speed bumps to be located on West Seventh Street off of West Street, Elm Street, and Belle Avenue. The speed bumps will be temporary with them being installed from spring to fall. The cost estimate is \$4,500 including the speed bumps and the two warning signs that would need to be installed. Town Manager Smith stated Mayor Shwed drafted a letter to the state pertaining the speed bumps on West Sixth Street.

Mrs. Valerie Crockett, 314 West Eighth, inquired if the speed limit can be reduced on West Sixth Street? Town Manager Smith advised Del-DOT would need to complete a traffic study to determine if the speed limit could be reduced.

Mrs. Cheri Clark, resident of East Sixth Street, inquired the speed limit on West Sixth Street? Town Manager Smith stated 25 mph.

President of Council Calio made a motion to request Del-DOT to install speed bumps on West 6<sup>th</sup> Street and to accept the proposal to install speed bumps on West Seventh Street. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish absent.

Town Manager Smith presented Development Updates:

- **Marino Development- 410 Mixed Used Development:** She advised she spoke with the developer and they're working with Del-DOT pertaining their traffic study.

- **Whaley Property – Rt. 9 & U.S. Rt. 13, 180 Apartments** – She advised the developers are still working with Soil Conservation.
- **Commercial Site – U.S. Route 13** – The developer is looking at another property and has made an offer on a property.
- **Rigbie:** The developer has received Downtown Development District Funding and P&Z granted the owner a 1-year extension of their preliminary site plan approval on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, with construction to begin in January 2024.
- **Laurel Glen Apartments:** They received their preliminary site plan approval on Wednesday, July 12, 2023.

Mayor Shwed presented the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Breakdown. Town Manager Smith thanked all the town staff for all their hard work for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and she has heard very positive comments on the location and the event. Town Manager Smith presented a 4<sup>th</sup> of July Breakdown pertaining the total income received and total expenses occurred. The total income received was \$16,108 and the total expenses occurred was \$26,824.24. Mayor Shwed stated the 4<sup>th</sup> of July was a great day and saw a lot of people in town enjoying themselves.

Mayor Shwed presented the Adoption of Sussex County Tax Assessment List. Town Manager Smith stated Mayor & Council must adopt the Sussex County Tax Assessment List in order to hold the Court of Appeals in August. President of Council Calio made a motion to adopt the Sussex County Tax Assessment List. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish absent.

Mayor Shwed presented the Appointment of Board of Adjustment. Town Manager Smith advised she recommends Mayor & Council to appoint Mr. Don Phillips and Mr. Randy Lee to fill the two vacancies and to re-appoint Mr. Jim LaRue, Mrs. Kathy LaRue, and Mrs. Valerie Crockett. Town Manager Smith stated committee members must have a background in development, land use, and zoning to be appointed to the Board of Adjustments. Councilman Kellam made a motion to accept the proposed appointments of the Board of Adjustments. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish absent.

Mayor Shwed advised citizens may retrieve a citizen complaint form on the Town of Laurel's website and then they must file a complaint form to the town, with notarization at no costs to the citizen.

Councilwoman Martin appreciates all the town staff for their service, and we must find a way to keep the town together.

Councilman Kellam thanked all the town staff for their hard work.

President of Council Calio followed-up on the questions asked on his behalf at last months meeting. He advised the town doesn't have an Economic Developer due to there is no appetite to raise taxes to fund this position. Until the town starts to see more roof tops minimal commercial development will occur, which is another reason an economic developer is not warranted. He advised the paper stated the town has no economic development committee, which the town has seeded a committee in prior years.

Councilman Oliveras thanked all the town staff for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and encouraged citizens to come to the meetings.

Mayor Shwed advised he as tasked Finance Manager Introcaso to prepare a document pertaining Neighboring Towns Revenue to share.

Mr. Mark Sikora, resident of East Fourth Street, expressed his concerns of speeding on East Fourth Street and his concerns of citizens leaving the town due to feeling unsafe.

Mrs. Laura Mackey, resident of West Sixth Street, inquired if Mayor & Council have established a Neighborhood Watch Group. Town Manager Smith advised a group is not established and when a group is established signs will be installed.

Mrs. Mackey, resident of West Sixth Street, inquired who is responsible for Poplar Street. Town Manager Smith advised the town is responsible for Poplar Street and the town has funding from the state to repave and the town isn't allowed to pave 15 feet within the railroad without railroad presence.

Mrs. Mackey, resident of West Sixth Street, inquired why the town is planning on narrowing the sidewalk on Poplar Street. Town Manager Smith stated there are no plans on narrowing the sidewalk on Poplar Street.

Mrs. Mackey, resident of West Sixth Street, advised citizens are putting their barbeques to close to their homes and she contacted the Fire Marshall Office and the Laurel Fire Department and they're not allowed to site homes if there property owned.

President of Council Calio made a motion to hold a closed session to discuss legal and contractual matters. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish absent.

Regular Session Recessed at 8:02 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened at 9:12 p.m.

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

Regular Session Adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

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Mayor

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President of Council

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Town Manager

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Recording Secretary