

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting
August 16, 2021

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held in the Mayor & Council Chambers at the Laurel Town Hall, on August 16, 2021, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor John Shwed, President of Council Chris Calio, Council Members Randy Lee, Robin Fisher-Cornish, Cheryl Martin, 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 Smith.

Mayor Shwed opened the Court of Appeals at 7:00 p.m. The purpose of holding the Court of Appeals is to listen to any citizen who wants to appeal the town's tax assessment for the FY 2022. Mayor Shwed inquired if the Court of Appeals was properly advertised. Town Manager Smith stated yes. Mayor Shwed stated with there being no questions or comments he was going to close the public hearing. The Court of Appeals closed at 7:05 p.m.

Mayor Shwed stated Mr. Jim Elliot from Sussex County Soil Conservation is in attendance to present proposed drainage improvements for Roger C. Fisher Park. Mr. Elliott stated Sussex County Soil Conservation were notified by DNREC regarding the availability of Water Quality Funds. Mr. Elliott proposes a water quality BB at the park, that is similar what the town already has at the water tower site at Rt.9. He stated the town may choose either to have higher maintenance or lower maintenance. Mr. Elliott stated nutrient credits will be available through this practice and the credits may bestowed to the towns future use. This project is at no expense to the town due to the grant, but the project must be completed in a year. Mayor Shwed inquired if Town Manager Smith and Public Works Director Foskey support this project. Town Manager Smith advised yes, because with the park holding water. Public Works Director Foskey advised yes, and he proposed to choose the landscaping for low maintenance.

Mayor Shwed stated Mr. Jeremy Ashe from DNREC is in attendance tonight to give an update on the Cooper Street Boat Ramp. Mr. Ashe as a follow up to the a proposed Concept Plan presented to Mayor & Council in June 2020 he has a more detailed plan for consideration and with approval from Mayor & Council DNREC could begin the design phase. Mr. Ashe presented a PowerPoint Presentation of the Concept Plan to Mayor & Council. He advised the plan has adequate parking for trailers and the protection of a 250 bald cypress tree. He stated by moving the current entrance it allows us to create an entrance without congestion. To help prevent congestion the proposed plan features a "Get Ready," and a "Tie Down" areas. The proposed plan also features a brand-new ramp and a courtesy dock. Mr. Ashe explained the East Rt.13 Boat Ramp became problematic and it is more expensive to correct the East Rt.13 Boat Ramp versus installing a new boat ramp at Cooper Street. Mr. Ashe advised a Planting Manager will oversee the regional planting regarding the project. Mr. Ashe inquired if Mayor & Council and the public had any questions pertaining to the Cooper Street Boat Ramp. Mayor Shwed inquired if the long parking slots were for boat parking. Mr. Ashe stated yes. President of Chris Calio inquired if the existing entrance off Cooper Street will be closed when project is complete. Mr. Ashe stated yes. Mr. Ashe

stated this project is funded by Fish & Wildlife and at no cost to the town. Mr. Mark Sikora, resident of East 4th Street, inquired as the reasoning to the design of the width of Willow Street Bridge. President of Council Calio stated no one redesigned the Mill Dam Bridge nor the width and it's been a one-lane bridge since the dam was originally constructed. Mr. Sikora inquired if the town asked to install a suspended walking bridge for pedestrians. President of Council Calio stated yes, the town brought this up, but it was a Del-DOT State Project. Ms. Cheri Clark, resident of East 6th Street, inquired if the handicapped deck will be a part of the proposed boat ramp project. Mr. Ashe stated the handicapped pier did have re-decking a few years ago and he can reach out to his supervisor if this could also become a part of the boat ramp project. Mayor Shwed thanked Mr. Ashe for his time and presentation.

Mayor Shwed stated Miss. Layla Gainer from Sparkle On is in attendance tonight to present a Kindness Project. Miss. Gainer stated Sparkle On is proposing to install a Rock Garden and a Blessing Box at Market Street Square Park to help inspire youth base community projects in the town. Mrs. Gainer read a letter out loud from the Laurel Public Library for support of this project. Mrs. Gainer stated Mr. Tellie Roberts will be helping with the landscaping and D&J Sweeper will be donating the rocks. Councilwoman Martin inquired where the rock garden will be located at Market Street Square Park. Mrs. Gainer stated they're looking at the open space in front of the Santa House. Mayor Shwed inquired if Town Manager Smith and Public Works Director Foskey support this project. Town Manager Smith and Public Works Director Foskey both stated yes. Mayor Shwed thanked Sparkle On for their presentation.

Mayor Shwed stated Ms. Cheri Clark, resident of East 6th Street, is in attendance tonight to present her request for chickens. Ms. Clark explained she is attendance tonight to Review the ordinance Chickens Prohibiting in Laurel, and the Interpretation of Code 49-13 and 49-14. She stated code 49-13 Prohibits Dangerous Animals, which are listed "Game Cocks and Other Fighting Birds." She advised the town received a legal interpretation years ago that Game Cocks were said to include all chickens. She explained only roosters of the male sex have cockspurs that are used to fight and flail male competitors. Ms. Clark stated she is raising 9 certified domestic heritage chickens that will produce eggs and live for about 12 years and she has created an old tool shed to house them in. She stated the City of Salisbury repealed the code and allows citizens the opportunity to raise backyard chickens. The City of Salisbury ordinance reads that no roosters are permitted, and the size of the flock is limited to six hens. Ms. Clark requested the town to consider adopting the change of the ordinance to permit chickens. Mayor Shwed thanked Ms. Clark for her presentation.

The Mayor & Council Regular Session Minutes of July 19, 2021, were presented for review and adoption. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the regular session minutes of July 19, 2021. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

The July 2021 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Director of Code Enforcement West advised he had no additions or changes to his report.
- Public Works Director Foskey stated he had no additions to his report.
- Finance Manager Introcaso stated she had no additions to her report.
- Town Manager Smith stated the construction of Phase 1 at Tidewater Park will begin in mid-September.
- Mayor Shwed introduced Judge Ruffin to Mayor & Council. Judge Ruffin advised she served 33 years in the Majesty Court and she is really glad to be here.
- Chief Wright stated the Laurel Police Department held their first Youth Cadet Academy on August 2, 2021 through August 6, 2021. He stated the class started with 30 participants and graduated with 26 participants. Chief Wright stated the TAC Staff included Officer Little, Trooper Cannon, Captain Kracayla, and himself. Chief Wright played a video of the Youth Cadet Academy to Mayor & Council.

Councilman Lee made a motion to accept the July 2021 Department Head Reports. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Mayor Shwed presented Town Manager Smith a Certificate of Recognition for 25 Years of Service.

Mayor Shwed presented the Nuisance Ordinance Update. Town Manager Smith advised she, Chief Wright, and Director of Code Enforcement met with the Town's Attorney to review the first draft of the Nuisance Ordinance. She explained the attorney reviewed the City of Wilmington's ordinance and the town's previous ordinance before the first drafting. Town Manager Smith stated the attorney is recommending an opportunity for public comment before adoption of this ordinance.

Mayor Shwed presented the Dunbar Mural Project Update. Town Manager Smith stated both the priming and the sketching of the outline of the mural has been completed. Town Manager Smith stated One-Laurel's Mural Day will be held Saturday, August 21, at Dunbar from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Town Manager Smith stated waivers must be completed before participants enter the scaffolding. Mrs. Ann Davis, resident of Pine Street, stated the sign will be going up tomorrow at the park on Central Avenue. Town Manager Smith advised the One-Laurel Committee raised enough funding to help cover the projects costs.

Mayor Shwed presented the approval/discussion of the proposed Sussex Conservation District drainage improvement at Roger C. Fisher Improvements. Councilman Lee made a motion to accept

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the proposed drainage improvements of Roger C. Fisher Park to be completed and funded by Sussex Conservation District. Councilman Kellam seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Mayor Shwed presented the approval/discussion of the Cooper Street Boat Ramp. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept DNREC's proposed plan of Cooper Street Boat Ramp. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Mayor Shwed presented the approval/discussion of the Sparkle On Project Kindness. Councilman Kellam made a motion to accept the Sparkle On Project Kindness with the support of the Laurel Public Library. Councilman Lee seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Mayor Shwed presented the approval/discussion of Ms. Cheri Clark's request for chickens. Mayor Shwed inquired if Town Manager Smith recommends an ordinance change for backyard chickens. Town Manager Smith advised her concern is the town already has chickens running loose and any ordinance drafted needs to be detailed. Mayor Shwed stated I understand where Ms. Clark is coming from, but the town is already struggling at a code point, and is against the requested change. Councilwoman Martin stated she doesn't agree with the requested change, and she believes chickens should be raised on a farm. President of Council Calio advised he's in favor of growing chickens in the backyard and he has no problems with the City of Salisbury's ordinance, but he would like to see more things added to the ordinance. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish stated this a code monitoring issue, which means another responsibility. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish proposed to table this discussion. Town Manager Smith advised she would reach out to other municipalities regarding their ordinance of backyard chickens. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish made a motion to table the discussion regarding the request of chickens. Councilman Lee seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Mayor Shwed presented a Portable Toilet Request on Willow Street from Ms. Renee Brewington, resident of Willow Street. Town Manager Smith stated Ms. Brewington is not in attendance tonight however per her request Ms. Brewington has a portable toilet in her back yard to help keep her flow down inside at her home. Councilwoman Martin made a motion to deny Ms. Brewington's Special Permit For Temporary Portable Toilet Use Request. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish applauded Chief's Wright Youth Cadet Academy.

Councilman Kellam congratulated Chief Wright on the Youth Cadet Academy and thanked the town staff for their hard work.

Mayor Shwed highlighted on his article he passed out to the Mayor & Council.

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Mrs. Ann Davis, resident of Pine Street, inquired how many girls attended the Youth Cadet Academy. Chief Wright advised there were at least 7 girls.

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 7-0.

Regular Session Recessed at 8:41 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened at 9:44 p.m.

Councilwoman Martin made a motion to accept the town's attorney Mr. Scott Wilcox's recommendation in regards to settling the case Roger Warner versus the Town of Laurel. Councilman Lee seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

With there being no further business, Councilwoman Martin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary