

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting
September 21, 2020

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held virtually by Zoom, on September 21, 2020 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, and Jeff Hill. Also, in attendance were Director of Code Enforcement Ken West, Public Works Director James Foskey, Chief Dan Wright, Alderman Kelly Pettyjohn, Manager Mary Introcaso, and Town Manager Jamie Smith. It was noted that Councilman Jonathan Kellam and Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant were absent.

Mayor Shwed explained Mr. Scott Lean from Kompan Playground and Fitness Solutions is in attendance to present the proposed design of Tidewater Park's Playground. Mr. Lean gave a brief Power-Point Presentation regarding the proposed design of Tidewater Park's Playground. He stated the purpose to build the playgrounds are to include security, visibility, availability, shelter, aesthetics, audiences, and exposure. The playground will feature three target areas including a 5 to 12 years play area, 2 to 5 years old play area, and a sensory area. Mayor Shwed thanked Mr. Lean for his presentation.

The Mayor & Council Regular Session Minutes and Closed Session Minutes of August 17, 2020 were presented for review and adoption. Councilman Lee made a motion to accept the regular and closed session meeting minutes of August 17, 2020. Councilman Hill seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

The August 2020 Department Head Reports were presented for review. Mayor Shwed advised due to limitations of teleconferencing we will not be going into great details pertaining the reports. Mayor Shwed advised reports were submitted by email to Mayor & Council for their review. Town Manager Smith stated the Vast Conferencing Equipment has been delivered and the next step is to install the phone line. She advised the Mayor & Council Meetings will be held in-person in the Council Chambers starting in October. Councilman Hill made a motion to accept the August 2020 Department Head Reports. Councilman Lee seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith made a recommendation for Mayor & Council to endorse the proposal of Tidewater Park's Playground Design as presented tonight and to continue to look for funding to help move forward with the project. President of Council Calio made a motion to endorse the proposal of Tidewater Park's Playground Design as presented. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith gave an update status regarding Dunbar. She explained Children's & Families First will be taken over the Telamon Head Start Program and their goal is to have children back in the building by mid-November. Town Manager Smith explained she and Chief Wright met with Ms. Sarah Wooten from State Legislative Hall and State Representative Dukes regarding Bond Money. They recommended the town to ask for \$700,000 of Bond Money and the town submitted the request but didn't receive any Bond Money due to COVID-19. Town

Manager Smith stated it will cost \$200,000 for the police to re-locate to Dunbar. She explained funding was received to install cameras inside and outside Dunbar. She also advised the USDA has funding but in loans not grants. Town Manager Smith stated an Energy Audit was conducted to help allow the town to save money. The gentleman will be attending a Mayor & Council to present his audit. Town Manager Smith stated the town has a private donor and the donor has asked to remain anonymous at this time. She advised one of the major costs will be installing a fire wall to separate the police department and Children's & Families First. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish inquired if Children's & Families First will present a presentation regarding their services. Town Manager Smith advised yes, they're willing to give a presentation and she was waiting until we hold in-person meetings to schedule them for a presentation.

Town Manager Smith gave a brief update regarding Halloween and Trunk or Treat. She advised the Governor is allowing towns to hold trick or treat and that the state will be providing guidelines. Town Manager Smith recommended the town to hold Trick or Treat on Saturday, October 31, 2020. Town Manager Smith advised the town could hold Trunk or Treat by obtaining a Special Event Permit. She explained she has reached out to the school district to utilize their parking lot at the Laurel Elementary School. This parking lot is larger than the Hardware Store and it will allow for more space to adhere to the social distancing requirements. Town Manager Smith proposed to close the street next to the school to allow for more space and parking. She stated the town must adhere to the mask requirements and social distancing requirements. She explained the need of volunteers are crucial to make sure everyone is abiding by the requirements. She stated Parks & Rec Committee has volunteered and we are looking for 5 or 6 more volunteers. She advised currently we are awaiting for the state's approval and the school's approval. Mayor Shwed recommended Town Manager Smith to reach out to Ms. Beckett Wheatley the Secretary of the Lions Club for volunteers. President of Council Calio made a motion to approve Halloween on Saturday, October 31, 2020 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. assuming we get state approval and to approve Trunk or Treat on October 24, 2020 assuming we get state approval. Councilman Hill seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith presented the Market Street Square Park Special Event. She stated the Rock-On Band featuring Brett and Will Parker will be performing on Saturday, October 3, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Town Manager Smith advised they understand the social distance requirements and are confident they will stay under the 250 capacity. She stated Parks & Rec Committee is supporting the free event. The rain date is Saturday, October 10, 2020 if needed. Councilman Lee made a motion to accept Rock-On Band performing at Market Street Square Park on Saturday, October 3, 2020. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith presented a proposed Craft Show Special Event Request. She stated the town received a request from Mrs. Maria Gordy to hold a Craft Show at Dunbar outside for

Cheer Starz. Ms. Gordy is going through the process on obtaining state approval regarding capacity. Town Manager Smith advised they understand the guidelines pertaining the mask and social distance requirements. They're tentatively looking at October 3, 2020 or October 10, 2020. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish advised the Multi-Cultural Cookout is being held on October 3, 2020 at Dunbar. Town Manager Smith advised she will reach out to Ms. Gordy about having the craft show on October 10, 2020. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish made a motion to accept the Craft Show Special Event Request. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith presented the October Mayor & Council Meeting Dates. Town Manager Smith proposed to hold two in-person Mayor & Council Meetings in October in the Council Chambers. She stated the first meeting will be held on Monday, October 5, 2020. This will be a trial run to make sure everything runs smoothly, and an update will be given on Halloween and Trunk or Treat. The second meeting of the month will be held on Monday, October 19, 2020. Councilman Hill made a motion to accept the October Mayor & Council Meeting Schedule. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith gave a brief update regarding the One-Laurel Group Projects. She stated the Race/Diversity Group will be holding a Multi-Cultural Cookout on October 3, 2020 at Dunbar. The Youth Group will be holding a Basketball Tournament and an Art's & Craft Show the first Saturday in November. The Respect/Safety Group are distributing town information in local newsletters that circulate throughout town. The Pride/Ownership Group are working on a proposed Sign Project.

Town Manager Smith stated when the town hires a non-certify officer the town must pay their salary and any additional academy costs. The officer must attend the academy and complete Field Training, which is approximately one year to complete. Town Manager Smith proposed to implement a sign-on bonus for certified officers. The sign-on bonus isn't in the budget currently and this proposal will be reviewed on a yearly basis. The proposed sign-on bonus consists of \$3,000 for 2 to 4 years, \$5,000 for 5 to 9 years, and 10,000 for 10+ plus years. The officer must commit to stay with the town for three years to receive the bonus and if the officer leaves before the three-year commitment the officer must reimburse the town. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish made a motion to accept the proposed sign-on bonus for Certified Officers. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Councilman Lee thanked the town staff for their hard work for making the town look good.

Mayor Shwed thanked the administrative staff and police department for keeping the town safe and running through these times.

Mr. Rick McVey, resident of Central Avenue, inquired who is financially responsible for the playground at Tidewater Park. Town Manager Smith advised the town is ultimately responsible for the park since it's on town property. She explained the project is supported by many partners including Reimagine Laurel and the LRC. The project is projected to cost \$900,000 and the town has made it clear it will not be funded by the town budget. Town Manager Smith explained by having various partners classified as a 501C(3) it can help the town secure different grants.

Mr. Rick McVey, resident of Central Avenue, inquired if the public had an opportunity to comment on the design of the playground at Tidewater Park. Town Manager Smith advised a design must be endorsed in order to apply for grant funding. She explained what was presented tonight was proposed from the Ramble Project.

Mayor Shwed stated the playground at Tidewater Park has been discussed for nearly five years.

President of Council Calio advised the Tidewater Park Playground was presented tonight for the public to view.

Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish recommended to put the design presentation in the local paper to allow the public to view.

Mr. Windsor advised the Ramble Project has been discussed and the concept of the project has been published for the public to view.

Town Manager Smith stated Mr. Windsor will be publishing an article regarding the design and if the public has a concern the concern will be forwarded to Mayor & Council and we will move forward from there.

Mr. Brian Shannon, from the LRC, advised Public Forum Meetings were first initiated to see what the public would like to see in the town. He stated the public wanted a well-lighted Riverwalk that was safe and a nature-based theme playground. Mr. Shannon advised the local paper, Reimagine Laurel, and the Town of Laurel have been supportive of the project and it has been a well-received project.

With there being no further business to discuss, Councilwoman Martin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary