THE TOWN OF LAUREL
MAYOR AND COUNCILWORKSHOP
Laurel Town Hall
201 Mechanic Street
November 2, 2026
7:00 p.m.

1. Opening Prayer
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Discussion of Vacant Structure Ordinance
4. Discussion of Committee Communication Recommendations RE: Website
5. Mayor and Council Comments
6. Citizens Comments
7. Adjourn

Note to the Public: In accordance with 29 Del. C. § 1004 (e) (2), this agenda was posted on October 26, 2026, at 2:54 p.m. at the time it was prepared by the Town Manager and at least seven (7) days in advance of the meeting. This agenda is subject to change to include the additional items including Executive/Closed Session or the deletion of items including Executive/Closed Session, which arise at the time of the meeting. Agenda items listed may be considered out of sequence.

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82488798049?pwd=Sd6jBGEX2HXSjz4f9574z6nqZ6QkgF.1
Meeting ID: 824 8879 8049
Passcode: 643310

ORDINANCE 2017-4

HOUSING STANDARDS

AMENDING CHAPTER 87

[HISTORY: Adopted by the Town Council of the Town of Laurel 11-20-1989 as Ord. No. 740. Amendments noted where applicable.)

Be it ordained by the Council of the Town of Laurel, in Council met, in the matter following to wit:

Chapter 87 of the Code of the Town of Laurel is hereby amended by adding Article II, Vacant Structures, which will read as follows:

Article II - VACANT STRUCTURES

Sec 87-86 - Purpose: applicability: definitions.

(a) **Purpose**. The purpose and intent of this Article is to require registration of vacant structures in the Town of Laurel to protect the public health, safety. Vacant structures are detrimental to the surrounding buildings and neighborhoods in which they exist. Furthermore, vacant structures are more likely than occupied structures to become sites of ordinance violations, illegal activity and to pose a greater burden on Town Code enforcement, fire resources and police costs that should be borne by those creating the demand for these resources, with the ultimate goal of promoting rehabilitation and occupancy of these vacant structures.

(b) **Applicability**. The provisions of this Article shall apply to all matters affecting or relating to vacant structure. Where, in this article, other sections of this Code may specify different requirements, the most restrictive shall govern. Property owned or controlled by governmental entities shall be exempt from this Article.

(c) **Existing remedies**. Nothing in this Article shall be construed to abolish or impair existing remedies of the Town or its agencies relating to remediation of any dangerous, unsafe, or unsanitary conditions or enforcement of other Code provisions relating to vacant structures

(d) **Definitions**. The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribe to them in this subsection, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning

(1) *Vacant Structure* means a building, structure, or dwelling that has been unoccupied for more than ninety (90) consecutive days; or a commercial tenant space greater than 5.000 square feet in an otherwise occupied structure, that has been left unoccupied for more than ninety (90) consecutive days. Vacant strucutre

shall be further defined as a building or structure where no person or persons, currently conduct a lawfully licensed business, or lawfully reside or live in any part of the structure as the legal or equitable owner(s) or tenant-occupant(s), or owner-occupants, or tenant(s) on a permanent, non-transient basis. Evidence offered to prove that a structure is vacant may include, but shall not be limited to: accumulation of mail, advertising flyers, or other materials delivered to or posted upon the property or premises; disconnection of telephone, electric, gas, heating, water or sewer services; overdue sewer service charges; overdue water charges; or overdue property taxes; one (1) or more property maintenance violations issued against the property address of the vacant structure within one hundred twenty (120) days preceding the issuance of a violation notice finding vacancy; absence of vehicles on the property with current registrations; absence of evidence of occupancy upon visual inspection or upon information provided by proximate property owners or tenants of proximate property.

(2) *Actively for sale or lease*: means the structure is being actively marketed through a licensed real estate broker, or the owner is regularly advertising the property in newspapers circulated in and around Laurel, it is being offered for sale or lease at a cost no more than 25% over the market rate, and the structure is in reasonable condition for sale or lease as determined by the Town Code Official, including but not limited to: no trash has collected inside or outside of the structure, the utilities are functional, and it is not being used as storage that is unrelated to its former use.

(3) *Occupied:* Means any building or structure occupied by one or more persons actually conducting a lawful business or who resides in all or any part of the structure as the licensed business-occupant, or as the legal or equitable owner/occupant(s) or tenant(s) on a permanent, non-transient basis, or any combination of the same. For purposes of this section, evidence offered to prove that a structure is so occupied may include, but shall not be limited to, the regular receipt or delivery of mail through the U.S. Postal Service; proof of continual telephone, electric, gas, heating, water and/or sewer services; or the most recent, federal, state, or city income tax statements indicating that the subject property is the official business or residence address of the person or business claiming occupancy; or proof of a pre-rental inspection.

(4) *Owner:* An owner of the freehold of the premises or any lesser estate therein, a mortgagee, a vendee-in-possession, assignee of rents, receiver, executor, trustee, lessee, agent or any other person, firm or corporation that is directly or indirectly in occupancy and/or in control of a structure subject to the provisions of this section.

Sec 87-87 - Monitoring, inspection and condition standards.

(a) The Code Enforcement Officer or his/her designee shall inspect any premises in the Town for the purpose of enforcing and assuring compliance with the provisions of this Article. Upon request of the Code Enforcement Officer or his/her designee, an owner shall provide access to all interior portions of a vacant structure in order to permit a complete inspection.

(b) Once a vacant structure is registered as such, the vacant structure shall be inspected annually for as long as it is remains vacant.

(c) The vacant structure shall be secured; the exterior structure and surrounding premises shall be maintained in accordance with all Town of Laurel Code requirements.

(d) The vacant structure shall be in reasonable condition (all utilities shall be functional, there shall be no trash or debris inside or outside the structure and it shall not be used as storage that is unrelated to the former use).

Sec. 87-88 Agent – Responsible person required.

(a) Property manager. Any owner of a vacant structure, residing outside of Sussex County ("the County"), shall be required to have a licensed property manager residing or having an office located in the County, or a family member or other designated individual who does not manage any other real estate for a fee and who resides in the County acting as a property manager. The property manager, including family members and designated individuals, shall have charge, care and control of the vacant structure, and shall provide access to the vacant structure for inspection upon request of the Code Enforcement Office or his/her designee within 30 days of notice.

(b) Corporate or partnership owners. Any corporation or partnership owning a vacant structure shall have a designated member, partner or employee having charge, care and control of the vacant structure. The designated member, partner or employee shall reside in or have an office located in the County, or shall be required to have a licensed property manager residing or having an office located in the County, or other designated individual who does not manage and other real estate for a fee, and who resides in the County, acting as a property manager. The property manager, or other designated individuals shall have charge, care and control of the vacant structure, and shall provide access to the vacant structure for inspection, upon request by the Code Enforcement Office or his/her designee, within 30 days.

(c) Interpretation. The Town Manager shall have the authority to make determinations regarding the ownership and/or responsible party for any structure determined to be vacant pursuant to this section.

Sec. 87-89 - Registration and registration fee.

(a)*Registration of structure.* There are two ways to register the structure as vacant.

(1) The owner shall register with the Town not later than 30 days after any structure becomes vacant, as defined. The registration of the vacant structure shall include the site address, the name and current owner or owners, current address of the owner and other persons or entities having an ownership interest, tax parcel number, proof of insurance on the structure, description of the structure, plans for the structure (to eliminate the vacancy), the responsible person or agent and their contact information (including but not limited to, email address, telephone number and facsimile number) and any other applicable information. If any information changes the owner is responsible for informing the Town of such changes in a timely manner. Failure to provide updated contact information shall be considered a violation of this Article.

(2) The Code Enforcement Office or his/her designee, shall investigate any structure that may be subject to registration. Based upon his findings, the Code Enforcement Office or his/her designee may register the structure as a vacant structure subject to this Article.

a. *Notice of Registration.* Within five business days of such registration, the licensing and permitting office shall notify the owners of the registered property by certified mail at their last known address according to the records of the Town of Laurel.

b. *Registration fee.*

(i) The annual registration fee shall be paid at the time of registration. If the Code Enforcement Office or his/her designee registers the structure as vacant the fee shall be due no later than 30 days after the structure is registered as vacant. The annual registration fee shall be due on the registration anniversary date every subsequent year as long as the structure remains vacant. The starting point for determining a structure as being vacant shall begin on the date of the enactment of this ordinance.

(ii) The annual fee is as provided for in Sec. 87-95 FEES –AND FINES

Sec87-90-*Appeal rights.* The owner shall have the right to appeal the imposition of the registration fees and fines to the Board of Adjustment and Appeals, upon the filing of an application in writing with the Board and a $500.00_ non-refundable filing fee to the Board no later than 15 calendar days after the date of the billing statement. On appeal, the owner shall bear the burden of providing satisfactory objective proof of occupancy, as defined herein.

Sec.87-91 - Violation and penalties

(a) If a property owner fails to register the vacant structure or fails to pay the registration fee within 30 days of the date such is due, the owner shall be in violation of this Article.

(1) A lien for the amounts owed may be assessed against the vacant structure and surrounding premises. Such lien amount may be referred to the Town's solicitor for collection in addition to the remedies available in subsection (a)(2)/
(2) The line amount will be incorporated into the parcel's tax bill and shall be collectible in the same manner as the annually imposed property tax.
(3) The lien amount shall be paid in full prior to the transfer of title.
(4) The lien amount will be paid in full prior to the issuance of any demolition permit.
(5) The line amount shall be paid in full prior to the issuance of any building permits or rental licenses for the subject vacant structure and any other structure that is owned by the owner within the Town.
(6) A fine shall be imposed against the offending party in accordance with the fine schedule presented in Sec. 87-95 - FEES –AND FINES

Sec.87-92- Exemptions- Types of structures eligible for exemption status from the registration fee.

(a) The following are exempt from the registration requirements of this Article: The structure has been substantially damaged due to fire or other casualty. The owner has 90 days to file for a permit to start construction or demolition or the structure will be determined to be vacant.

(b) It is incumbent upon the owner to request an exemption and to show good cause why such exemption should be granted. The following structures shall be registered as vacant, but they are exempt from the registration fee:
(1) The structure is actively being offered for sale or lease for a maximum period of 5 years. After such time, this Article will be in effect. The burden to prove such is the case shall be that of the owner.
(2) The owner has obtained a building permit and is progressing in an expedient manner to prepare the structure for occupancy.
(3) The vacant structure is in probate or where the owner has entered a long-term care facility within six months of the structure becoming vacant.
(4) The property is undergoing currently environmental cleanup or assessment.

(c) Two-year waiver. Upon application by the owner, the Board of Adjustment and Appeals may grant a two-year waiver of the registration fee if the owner meets the criteria for non-profit organizations as defined by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(d) Failure to register. If the owner of the property fails to register the property with the Town of Laurel within 30 days of notification to do so by the Town of Laurel staff, then the property owner/agent may not be entitled to exemption from the fees.

Furthermore, to be exempt from the registration fee, it must be shown that the following conditions are met:

(1) All financial obligations associated with the vacant structures that are owed to the Town are paid and current except for the registration fees that are the subject of the exemption request.

(2) There are no open zoning, building or property maintenance code violation on the property.

Sec. 87-93- Duty to Maintain the Property

In no instance shall registration of a vacant structure exonerate a responsible party from maintaining the vacant structure and surrounding premises and complying with all Town of Laurel Code requirements. If a vacant structure and surrounding premises on which it is located is not maintained pursuant to the provision of this Article the Town Code, fees and penalties may accrue and be charged against the vacant structure and the property upon which it is located.

Sec. 87-94 - Appeal of the 25 percent over market rate

An appeal of the 25 percent over market rate (from the actively for sale or lease definition) can be considered through an appraisal using accepted appraisal standards to determine market value. The owner has the option of asking the county tax assessor to perform the appraisal or having one preformed (using accepted appraisal standards) at their own expense.

Sec. 87-95 - FEES –AND FINES

ANNUAL FEE

AMOUNT OF TIME STRUCTURE IS VACANT	ANNUAL FEE
Structures vacant for one year or less	**$500.00**
Structures vacant for 1 year but less than 2	**$700.00**
Structures vacant for 2 years but less than 3	**$900.00**
Structure vacant for 3 years but less than 4	**$1100.00**
Structures vacant for 4 years but less than 5	**$1300.00**
Structures vacant for 5 years or longer	**$1500.00**

FINES

Any person violating any of the provisions of this chapter shall, upon conviction, be subject to a fine of not less than $500.00 nor more than $1,500.00 and imprisoned for a term of not less than 10 days nor more than 20 days for the first such conviction, or both, and shall pay the costs of prosecution. For a second or subsequent offense, any person shall, upon conviction, be subject to a fine of not less than $700.00 nor more than $2,500.00 or imprisoned for a term of not less than 20 days nor more than 30 days for each such conviction, or both, and shall pay the costs of prosecution. For the purposes of this chapter, each day, or part of a day, that a violation of any of the provisions of this chapter continues shall be deemed and taken to be a separate and distinct violation.

BE IF FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THIS Ordinance will become effective upon its enactment following the Second Reading.

Date of First Reading: _____

Date of Second Reading: _____

MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF
LAUREL, DELAWARE

By: _____
John J. Shwed, Mayor

Attest: _____
Jamie T. Smith
Secretary

Chapter 15.22 - VACANT BUILDINGS

15.22.010 - Scope.

The provisions of this chapter govern buildings and lots located within the city of Salisbury.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

(Ord. No. 2720, 5-12-2022)

15.22.020 - Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to protect the public health and safety and the general welfare of the citizens of the city of Salisbury and to assist the city government in monitoring the number of vacant properties in the city to assess the effects of the condition of those properties on nearby businesses and the neighborhoods in which they are located, particularly in light of fire safety hazards and unlawful, temporary occupancy by transients, including illicit drug users and traffickers, and to promote substantial efforts to rehabilitate such vacant properties.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

(Ord. No. 2720, 5-12-2022)

15.22.030 - Definitions.

The following definitions shall be used in the construction and interpretation of this chapter:

"Building" means a structure of any kind constructed for the shelter, support, or enclosure of persons, animals, chattels, or operations.

"Director" means the director of the Housing and Community Development Department.

"Lot" means a parcel or property without a building or other improvement on site. "Lot" shall not include unimproved real property which has ongoing, permitted construction.

"Occupied" means a building shall be deemed to be occupied if one or more persons actually conduct business or reside in all or any part of the building as the legal or equitable owner-occupant(s) or tenant(s) on a permanent, nontransient basis. For purposes of this section, evidence offered to prove that a building is occupied may include, but shall not be limited to, the regular receipt or delivery of regular mail through the U.S. Postal Service; proof of continual telephone, electric, gas, heating, water and sewer services; or the most recent, federal, state, or city income tax statements indicating that the subject property is the official address of the person or business claiming occupancy.

"Owner" has the meaning set forth in Section 15.24.030.

"Person" means any individual, partnership, firm, corporation, association or other legal entity of whatsoever kind and nature.

"Vacant" means no person or persons actually, currently conduct a lawfully licensed business, or lawfully reside or live in any part of the building as the legal or equitable owner(s) or tenant-occupant(s), on a permanent, nontransient basis.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

(Ord. No. 2456, 10-9-2017; Ord. No. 2720, 5-12-2022)

15.22.040 - Vacant property registration.

A. Applicability. The requirements of this section shall be applicable to each owner of a building or lot that shall have been vacant for more than one hundred eighty (180) consecutive days, except that a condemned building shall be registered within thirty (30) days after notice that the building official has condemned the structure pursuant to Chapter 15.24 herein.

B. Registration. Each such owner of a vacant building or lot shall file a registration form and pay an annual fee with the Housing and Community Development Department each year. The registration form shall include the street address of each such vacant building or lot, the names and addresses of all owners, as hereinafter described, and any other information deemed necessary by the director. The registration and annual fee(s) as required by subsection (C) shall be billed by the Housing and Community Development Department and shall be paid by August 1st of each year.

1. If the owner is a corporation, the registration statement shall provide the names and residence addresses of all officers and directors of the corporation;
2. If the owner is an estate, the registration shall provide the name and business address of the personal representative of the estate;
3. If the owner is a trust, the registration shall provide the names and address of all trustees, grantors and beneficiaries;
4. If the owner is a partnership, the registration shall provide the names and residence addresses of all partners with an interest of ten (10) percent or greater;
5. If the owner is any other form of unincorporated association, the registration shall provide the names and residence addresses of all principals with an interest of ten (10) percent or greater;
6. If the owner is an individual person, the registration shall provide the name and address of that individual person;
7. If none of the persons listed in subsections (B)(1) through (B)(6) has an address in this state, the registration statement also shall provide the name and address of a person who resides within the state and who is authorized to accept service of process on behalf of the owner(s) and who

shall be designated as a responsible, local party or agent, both for purposes of notification in the event of an emergency affecting the public health, safety or welfare and as herein authorized and connection herewith.

C. Registration and Annual Fees. The registration and annual fees of vacant buildings and lots shall be set by the city council from time to time. The registration fee shall be paid once, at the time the property is registered. The annual fee is a reoccurring fee each year until such time as the property is no longer vacant.

D. Inspection. All vacant buildings that remain on the vacant property registry for more than one fiscal year shall be subject to an annual inspection. This annual inspection shall consist of both an internal and external inspection of any structures located on the property. The fee for this annual inspection shall be established by the city council from time to time.

E. This section does not apply to a vacant lot that:

1. Adjoins a non-vacant lot or property that is titled to the same owner of record as the vacant lot;
2. Is currently used in connection with a licensed business for parking, storage or other legitimate business purpose; or
3. Is located within a residential district.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

(Ord. No. 2348, 8-10-2015; Ord. No. 2456, 10-9-2017; Ord. No. 2720, 5-12-2022)

15.22.050 - Transfer.

To transfer a vacant building or lot registration from one property owner to another, the owner shall give written notice, including the name and address of the transferee to the Housing and Community Development Department at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to any transfer of the registered property. The transferee must make application to the Housing and Community Development Department and pay the required fee for a transfer of a registration within thirty (30) days after the transfer of the property.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

(Ord. No. 2456, 10-9-2017; Ord. No. 2720, 5-12-2022)

15.22.060 - Failure to register or pay annual fee.

A. Failure to timely register a vacant building or lot, pay an annual or registration fee, notify the director of transfer of a vacant building or lot, or transfer a registration pursuant to this chapter shall result in a violation in accordance with Section 15.22.090 of this chapter.

B. If the full amount of any fees due to the city is not paid by the owner within thirty (30) days after the notice thereof, the director shall cause to be recorded in the finance department the amount of fees due and owing, and such amount will be carried on the records of the City of Salisbury and shall be collectible in the same manner as real estate taxes are collected.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

(Ord. No. 2720, 5-12-2022)

15.22.070 - Prohibited occupancy.

Vacant buildings required to be registered pursuant to this chapter shall not again be occupied unless a certificate of occupancy has been issued by the director.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

15.22.080 - Appeals procedure.

A. Any person wishing to appeal a determination of the Housing and Community Development Department shall file a written notice of appeal with the director within twenty-one (21) days after the department's action. The notice shall contain a statement of the grounds for the appeal. The notice of appeal shall be accompanied by a fee as set from time to time by the city council.

B. The director shall refer the appeal to the Board of Appeals.

C. When hearing appeals under this chapter, the board shall follow the procedures set forth in Chapters 17.12.090 through 17.12.130 of this code.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

(Ord. No. 2456, 10-9-2017; Ord. No. 2769, § 1, 2-13-2023)

15.22.090 - Violations—Penalties.

A. Any person found in violation of the provisions of this chapter shall be guilty of a municipal infraction and shall be subject to a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars ($500.00) per violation. Each day a violation remains uncorrected is a separate violation subject to an additional citation and fine.

(Ord. 2017 § 1 (part), 2006)

ARTICLE XX. - ANNUAL REGISTRATION OF VACANT BUILDINGS AND REGISTRATION FEES

Sec. 18-1556. - Purpose.

The purpose of this section is to assist the town government, particularly the department of building and inspections in protecting the public health, safety and welfare, to monitor the number of vacant buildings in the town, to assess the effects of the condition of those buildings on nearby businesses and the neighborhoods in which they are located, particularly in light of fire safety hazards and unlawful, temporary occupancy by transients, including illicit drug users and traffickers, and to require of the owners of such vacant buildings their registration and the payment of related fees, and to promote substantial efforts to rehabilitate such vacant buildings. The provisions of this section are applicable to the owners of such vacant buildings as set forth herein and are in addition to and not in lieu of any and all other applicable provisions of this chapter, the health and sanitation code, and any other applicable provisions of the Town of Smyrna Code.

(Ord. No. 001-07, § 1, 4-16-07; Ord. No. 010-17, § 1, 12-18-17)

Sec. 18-1557. - Definitions and applicability; registration statement and fees.

(a) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings respectively ascribed to them as follows:

(1) *Boarded:* A building or structure subject to the provisions of this section shall be deemed to be "boarded" if in place of one or more exterior doors, other than a storm door, or of one or more windows, there is plywood or similar material covering the space for such door or window.

(2) *Exterior maintenance and major systems:* The phrase "exterior maintenance and major systems" shall mean the safe and lawful maintenance of the facade, windows, doors, roof, and other parts of the exterior of the building and the maintenance of its major systems consisting of the roof, the electrical and plumbing systems, the water supply system, the sewer system, and the sidewalk, drive-way, if any, area of the lot, as applicable and as enforced by the department of building and inspections

(3) *Occupied:* Any building or structure shall be deemed to be occupied if one or more persons actually conducts a lawful business or resides in all or any part of the building as the licensed business-occupant, or as the legal or equitable owner/occupant(s) or tenant(s) on a permanent, non-transient basis, or any combination of the same. For purposes of this section, evidence offered to prove that a building is so occupied may include, but shall not be limited to, the regular receipt of delivery of regular mail through the U.S. Postal Service; proof of continual telephone,

electric, gas, heating, water and/or sewer services; or the most recent, federal, state, or city income tax statements indicating that the subject property is the official business or residence address of the person or business claiming occupancy; or proof of pre-rental inspection.

(4) *Open:* A building or structure subject to the provisions of this section shall be deemed to be "open" if any one or more exterior doors other than a storm door is broken, open and, or closed but, without a properly functioning lock to secure it, or if one or more windows is broken or not capable of being locked and secured from intrusion, or any combination of the same.

(5) *Owner:* An owner of the freehold of the premises or any lesser estate therein, a mortgagee, a vendee-in-possession, assignee of rents, receiver, executor, trustee, lessee, agent or any other person, firm or corporation that is directly or indirectly in control of a building subject to the provisions of this section, and as set forth below.

(6) *Vacant:* A building or structure shall be deemed to be vacant if no person or persons actually, currently conducts a lawfully licensed business, or lawfully resides or lives in any part of the building as the legal or equitable owner(s) or tenant-occupant(s), or owner-occupants, or tenant(s) on a permanent, non-transient basis.

(7) *Vacant building, habitually:* Any building, whether residential or non-residential, that has been vacant for more than 90 consecutive days.

(8) *Vacant, for sale or lease:* A vacant building or structure shall be deemed for sale or for lease if it is being actively marketed by a licensed real estate broker or owner who is regularly advertising the property in newspapers circulated in the Town of Smyrna, is offered at a price that is not more than 25 percent above the market value, and is in reasonable condition for sale or lease as determined by the town building official.

(b) *Applicability.* Registration and the payment of a registration fee shall be required for all habitually vacant buildings, whether vacant and secure, vacant and open or vacant and boarded. The property owner of a habitually vacant building, as determined by the town's assessment records, shall have 30 days from the date the building qualifies as a habitually vacant building to file a notarized registration statement, which shall include the street address and parcel number of each such vacant building, the names and addresses of all owners, and any other information deemed necessary by the department of building and inspections. If the town identifies a habitually vacant building where the property owner has not filed a registration statement within the required 30 days, the town shall notify the property owner of the requirement to register the habitually vacant building and pay an annual registration fee. Annually thereafter, the property owner shall be required to provide the town with an updated registration statement by December 31. In no instance shall the registration of a habitually vacant building and the payment of registration fees be construed to exonerate the owner, agent or responsible party from responsibility for compliance with any other building code or

housing code requirement. One registration statement may be filed to include all habitually vacant buildings of the owner so registering. The registration fee(s) as required by subsection (c) of this section shall be billed by the town and shall be paid by December 31 of each year.

(c) *Registration statement and fees; local agent.* If none of the persons listed, as above, is shown at an address within the state, the registration statement also shall provide the name and address of a person who resides within the state and who is authorized to accept service of process on behalf of the owners and who shall be designated as a responsible, local party or agent, both for purposes of notification in the event of an emergency affecting the public health, safety or welfare and for purposes of service of any and all notices or registration statements as herein authorized and in connection herewith.

In addition to the filing of an annual registration statement, the owner of a habitually vacant building shall be required to pay a non-refundable, annual vacant building registration fee. Said fee shall be billed by the town by November 30 of each year in which a building was habitually vacant, with the fee being due by December 31. The billing statement shall include the right to appeal outlined in subsection (d) herein. The deadline for sending out vacant building registration fee bills may be extended by the town as long as property owners are given at least 30 days to pay the fee. Vacant building registration fees shall be based on the duration of the vacancy, the use of the building, and the size of the building, as determined by the following scale:

(1) The vacant building registration fee for any size residential or non-residential habitually vacant buildings that are vacant for less than one year shall be $500.00, with the partial year consisting of the date the registration statement was filed by the property owner or the date the town mailed notice to the property owner of the need to file a registration statement, whichever occurred first, through the end of the calendar year. This fee shall be waived for all property owners who filed their initial registration fee within 30 days of a building qualifying as a habitually vacant building, but it shall not be waived if the town mails notice to the property owner of the need to file the registration statement;

(2) For each of the next two calendar years thereafter that a habitually vacant building remains vacant (years one and two), the vacant building registration fee shall be as follows:

a. $500.00 for residential habitually vacant buildings;

b. $1,000.00 for non-residential habitually vacant buildings under 10,000 square feet; and

c. $2,500.00 for non-residential habitually vacant buildings of 10,000 square feet or greater.

(3) For each of the next three calendar years thereafter that a habitually vacant building remains vacant (years three through five), the vacant building registration fee shall be as follows:

a. $1,000.00 for residential habitually vacant buildings;

b. $2,000.00 for non-residential habitually vacant buildings under 10,000 square feet; and

c. $5,000.00 for non-residential habitually vacant buildings of 10,000 square feet or greater.

(4) For each of the next five calendar years thereafter that a habitually vacant building remains vacant (years six through ten), the vacant building registration fee shall be as follows:

a. $2,000.00 for residential habitually vacant buildings;

b. $4,000.00 for non-residential habitually vacant buildings under 10,000 square feet; and

c. $10,000.00 for non-residential habitually vacant buildings of 10,000 square feet or greater.

(5) For each calendar years thereafter that a habitually vacant building remains vacant (years eleven and beyond), the vacant building registration fee shall be as follows:

a. $500.00 for residential habitually vacant buildings;

b. $1,000.00 for non-residential habitually vacant buildings under 10,000 square feet; and

c. $2,000.00 for non-residential habitually vacant buildings of 10,000 square feet or greater.

A registration fee shall not be required for a habitually vacant building in any year in which the property owner has provided the town with satisfactory proof of occupancy prior to November 1. The starting point for counting a building as being vacant shall begin on the effective date of this article.

(d) *Appeal rights.* The owner shall have the right to appeal the imposition of the registration fees to the housing/building code board of appeals, upon filing an application in writing with the applicable non-refundable filing fee (in the amount specified in the town's fee schedule) to the department of building and inspections no later than 15 calendar days after the date of the billing statement. On appeal, the owner shall bear the burden of providing satisfactory objective proof of occupancy, as defined herein.

(e) *One-year waiver of registration fee.* Upon application by the owner, a one-year waiver of the registration fee may be granted one time by the town manager or his/her designee if the owner:

(1) Demonstrates with satisfactory proof that he/she is in the process of demolition, rehabilitation, or other substantial repair of the habitually vacant building; and

(2) Objectively demonstrates the anticipated length of time for the demolition, rehabilitation, or other substantial repair of the habitually vacant building; or

(3) Provides satisfactory proof that he/she was actively attempting to sell or lease the property during the vacancy period.

(f) *Two-year waiver.* Upon application by the owner, a two-year waiver of the registration fee may be granted one time by the town manager or his/her designee if the owner meets the criteria for non-profit organizations as defined by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The two-year waiver is in lieu of, and may not be combined with, the one-year waiver authorized in subsection (e).

(g)

Delinquent registration fees as a lien. After the owner is given notice of the amount of the registration fee due, except for those owners that have properly perfected an appeal pursuant to subsection (d) above, and the owner fails to pay the amount due, said amount shall constitute a debt due and owing to the town and a lien against the property pursuant to 25 Del. C. § 2901, and the town may pursue any legal or equitable remedies available to collect the unpaid debt.

(h) *Duty to amend registration statement.* If the status of the registration information changes during the course of any calendar year, it is the responsibility of the owner, former owner, responsible party or agent for the same to contact the department of building and inspections within 30 days of the occurrence of such change and advise the department in writing of those changes.

(i) *Exceptions.* This section shall not apply to any building owned by the United States, the state, the town, nor to any of their respective agencies or political subdivisions.

(j) *Violations; penalties.* The failure or refusal for any reason of any owner, or agent of an owner acting on behalf of the owner, to register a habitually vacant building or to pay any fees required to be paid pursuant to the provisions of this section, within 30 days after they become due, shall constitute a violation punishable upon conviction thereof by a fine in the amount of not less than $100.00 nor more than $500.00 for each failure or refusal to register, or for each failure or refusal to pay a required vacant building fee, as applicable. In such cases, whenever the minimum fine of $100.00 is imposed, it shall not be subject to suspension or reduction for any reason.

(k) *Denial of demolition permit.* No demolition permit shall be issued for the demolition of any building which is subject to the provisions of the building code requiring the annual registration of such building and the payment of vacant building registration fees if, as determined by the code official, the building has not been so registered or such registration fees have not been paid; provided, however, the building official may issue a demolition permit if in his judgment the immediate demolition of the building is required for the safety of nearby residents, or in an emergency, or if the code official determines that rehabilitation of such building is not financially feasible. Upon proper registration of such building and payment of vacant building registration fees, the building official may issue a demolition permit.

(l) *Monitoring, inspection and condition standards.* The building official shall inspect any building in the town for purposes of this section, but the building official shall not access the interior of the building without first obtaining permission from the property owner or a lawfully issued warrant. The habitually vacant building shall be secured at all times. The habitually vacant building shall be kept in reasonable condition, all utilities shall be functional, there shall be no trash or debris inside or outside the building, and the building shall not be used as storage or in any other manner that is unrelated to its former use.

(m) *Interpretation.* The town manager shall have the authority to make determinations regarding the ownership and/or responsible party for any building determined to be vacant pursuant to this section. All notices and bills shall be sent to the property owner's address as indicated on the

registration statement. If a registration statement has not been filed with the town, all notices and bills shall be sent to the property owner's address as identified in the town's property assessment records.

(n) All vacant building registration fees paid to the town pursuant to subsection (c) of this article and all penalties paid to the town pursuant to subsection (j) of this article shall be held in an account separate and apart from the general revenues of the town and shall be transferred on at least an annual basis to the Smyrna Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Authority for use by the Authority to further the purposes of the Authority as outlined in Article XII ("Redevelopment Authority") of this Chapter 18 ("Buildings and Building Regulations").

(Ord. No. 001-07, § 1, 4-16-07; Ord. No. 009-12, § 1, 8-20-12; Ord. No. 010-17, § 2, 12-18-17; Ord. No. 014-23, § 1, 10-16-23; Ord. No. 002-24, § 1, 4-1-24)

Secs. 18-1558—18-1599. - Reserved.

George Lodato <georgelodato@gmail.com> 7/14/2026 5:25 PM

vacant property questions

To Jamie Smith <laureltm@comcast.net>

Good afternoon, Jamie,

Thank you again for looking into the vacant property information we discussed. As I continue reviewing the registry and related records, I have several follow-up questions that would help me better understand the Town's process. I realize this is coming late on the day before our meeting, so any information you are able to provide beforehand would be appreciated; we can follow up on the remaining items later.

- I cannot find the ordinance or Town policy that authorizes a reset. Under what circumstances is the registration period or escalating vacant property fee schedule "reset"? Please identify the ordinance or Town policy that authorizes a reset and explain how the Town documents these resets. I see a "pause" but not a reset.
- I noticed on the "Invoice Listing" report that vacant property fees were assessed and/or collected in 2018 and 2019. Is there a way to identify the specific property address associated with each of those fees?
- Can you provide a list of the vacant properties that currently have active building permits?
- For vacant properties with active building permits, how does the Town verify that work is actively progressing within the time requirements established by the Town Code?
- Does the Town maintain a separate list or tracking report for condemned properties? If so, can you provide a copy of the current report?
- Does the Town maintain historical records showing properties that were removed from the vacant property registry? If so, can those records identify the property, date of registration, date of removal, and reason for removal?

Thank you,
George

Email request sent through GIC web page 06-09-2026

The Town of Laurel is interested in working with GIC to redesign our municipal website.

Our current website no longer effectively serves the needs of our residents. Navigation can be difficult, important information is not always easy to locate, and the site does not provide the level of accessibility and communication that our community deserves. After a thorough review, we determined that a comprehensive redesign would be more beneficial than making incremental updates to the existing platform.

To help assess the website, I formed a Communications Committee to review the site and identify areas for improvement. Following its review, the committee agreed that a complete redesign would provide the best opportunity to improve accessibility, usability, and communication with our residents.

As part of our research, we reviewed several municipal websites designed by GIC and were very impressed by their appearance, functionality, and ease of use. It is clear that GIC understands the unique needs of local governments and the importance of providing residents with easy access to information and services.

I would also like to share a challenge we face as a community. Laurel is one of Delaware's smaller and less affluent municipalities. Like many rural communities, we work hard to provide essential services while operating with very limited financial resources. Although we recognize the importance of investing in a modern website, a project cost in the range of $40,000 would be extremely difficult for our Town to absorb.

For us, this project is not simply about updating a website, it is about improving communication with residents, increasing transparency, supporting local businesses, and ensuring that citizens can easily access important information about their local government.

With that in mind, I would be grateful to learn whether GIC offers any grant opportunities, phased implementation options, nonprofit or municipal assistance programs, or other ways to help communities with limited budgets undertake

projects such as this. We are committed to improving our website, but we need a solution that is financially attainable for our Town.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We would greatly appreciate any guidance or assistance you may be able to provide. I look forward to hearing from you and discussing whether there may be a path forward for Laurel.

Respectfully,

George Lodato
Councilman
Town of Laurel

Email request sent through GIC web page 09-16-2026

The Town of Laurel is interested in partnering with GIC to redesign our municipal website.

Why a Redesign Is Needed

Our current website no longer serves residents effectively. Navigation is difficult, important information can be hard to find, and the site falls short of the accessibility and communication standards our community deserves. After a thorough review, our Communications Committee concluded that a comprehensive redesign would deliver greater value than incremental updates to the existing platform.

Why GIC

As part of our research, we reviewed several municipal websites designed by GIC and were impressed by their appearance, functionality, and ease of use. Your work demonstrates a clear understanding of local government needs and the importance of giving residents convenient access to information and services.

Community Impact and Budget Constraints

Laurel is one of Delaware's smaller, less affluent municipalities. Like many rural communities, we provide essential services with limited financial resources. Although we recognize the importance of a modern website, a project cost of approximately $40,000 would be extremely difficult for the Town to absorb.

For Laurel, this project is about more than updating a website. It would help us:

- Improve communication with residents
- Increase transparency
- Support local businesses
- Make essential government information and services easier to access

Request for Assistance

If you are not able to assist us in building a site, Could you please let us know whether GIC offers grants, phased implementation options, municipal assistance programs, or other approaches that could make a project of this kind more

affordable? We are committed to improving our website and would welcome the opportunity to discuss a financially attainable path forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We would greatly appreciate any guidance or assistance you can provide, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,
George Lodato
Councilman
Town of Laurel

Report Date	October 12, 2026
Prepared By	Communications Committee
Subject	Communication, community outreach, and Town website modernization

Town of Laurel, Delaware

Communications Committee Report and Website Modernization Recommendations

1. Executive Summary

The Communications Committee was established to identify opportunities to improve communication among the Town of Laurel, the Laurel School District, and our Laurel residents. The Committee consisted of three residents and two Town Council members; a Laurel School District representative was unavailable to participate.

The Committee recommended that our town newsletter be updated and developed a **Welcome to Laurel** brochure. The newsletter received a positive community response, and the Mayor and Town Council approved the brochure, which was printed and recently distributed at a Laurel event.

The Committee's website reviews identified opportunities to improve navigation, accessibility, online services, public information, and security. It recommends replacing the ageing site with a resident-focused municipal website. The most effective way to do that is to utilize current development software to redesign a new website that can meet all requirements and be easily maintained.

Appendix A contains the Website Requirements Document which outlines a detailed website design.

2. Findings

- Website is useful but difficult to navigate.
- Missing access to important public documents (i.e. audits and budget vs actual reports).
- Forms and applications process is outdated. There should be fillable forms online with status tracking capability.
- No comprehensive calendar of events/meetings.
- Missing links to important community resources and civil organizations.

3. Recommended Website Features

The new website should be easy to navigate and maintain, secure, comprehensive and provide fillable forms for online services.

- **Navigation:** Should be intuitive and include search capability, quick links, and reliable access on all devices. A language translation function should also be included.

- **Maintenance:** Should be easy for administrative staff to update monthly reports and documents. Whenever possible, links to relevant sites/information should be utilized to minimize maintenance required by town staff.
- **Secure:** Role-based access, confidentiality, recovery, backups, scheduled publishing, and assigned maintenance.
- **Comprehensive:** Should provide organized access to budgets, audits, financial reports, agendas, minutes, recordings, ordinances, permits, forms, and other public records.
- **Online Services:** Fillable forms for permits, rentals, licenses, concerns, and status tracking.

4. Proposed Website Layout

Attachment 1 approximates the new website home page. Main tabs at the top include:

- **Our Town:** History, community information, newsletters, transportation, schools, services, and notices.
- **Mayor & Council:** Officials, wards, elections, agendas, minutes, and meetings
- **Departments:** Finance, Public Works, Code Enforcement, Alderman's Court, and Police.
- **Civic Organizations:** Local civic organizations.
- **Applications & Forms:** Permits, licenses, registrations, and frequently used forms.
- **Documents:** Important public documents
- **Resources:** Community assistance and social services.

Also included on the home page should be "Quick Links" which will give residents direct access to the most-used services. Finally, a comprehensive calendar and news/events will also be displayed.

Attachment 2 shows the next level of menu options for each of the main tabs listed on the home page.

5. Cost

As a small town, Laurel has funding challenges. During the committee's research, we came across a Delaware State organization that provides website development, training, and maintenance for municipalities at no cost. The organization is the Delaware Government Information Center (GIC). Detailed information on GIC can be found at https://gic.delaware.gov/website-design-and-development-services/. Committee members contacted GIC in June but were advised that GIC was unable to take on any new development efforts at that time. This is obviously a great option for the town. The committee feels that perhaps if Town Management were to contact them, GIC might be more responsive. Even if there is a waiting list, the fact that it would not cost the town money makes it an excellent option.

Tim Smith from Delmarva Digital presented his thoughts in a workshop held in May. The Committee advised him that we were looking at a very similar website to the one they developed for Georgetown. Without more detailed requirements, Mr. Smith could only provide a range of costs from $15,000 to $50,000.

In the absence of being able to use GIC, the Committee would recommend a competitive bid process to get the best value. The Committee has generated a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) and it is provided in Appendix B.

6. Recommended Actions

1. Re-engage GIC about no-cost assistance or placement on a waiting list. If GIC is unavailable, utilize attached RFP to solicit competitive bids. The draft RFP was developed with AI assistance and should be reviewed and verified before use**.** Recommend Town management confirm Charter, procurement, bidding, and legal requirements are met before finalizing the RFP. **The website requirements document and RFP should be updated as the town finalizes its objectives and scope. If requirements are modified, the RFP will need to reflect those changes.**
2. Finalize project objectives, scope, priorities, and requirements for accessibility, security, services, and content management.
3. Review existing website content and decide what to migrate, revise, archive, or remove.
4. Set an affordable budget for implementation, hosting, maintenance, licensing, training, security, and updates. Funding is better spent on developing a new website with current software and more capabilities.

7. Conclusion

The Committee recommends a comprehensive redesign and replacement of the existing town website rather than continued incremental updates. A modern website would improve public access to information, simplify navigation, expand online services, strengthen security, and reduce routine maintenance demands while supporting the Town's future needs.

The immediate priorities are to revisit the no-cost GIC option, finalize the town's requirements, and pursue competitive proposals, if necessary. Establishing the Communications Committee as a permanent standing committee would provide continuity and ongoing oversight of the town's communication initiatives.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Website Requirements Document **-** Outlines the recommended design and functional requirements for the new website.

Appendix B: Draft Request for Proposal (RFP) - Contains a Request for Proposal template which can easily be tailored as the website needs evolve.

Appendix A:

Website Requirements Document

Appendix A:
Municipal Website Requirements Document

Based on "Proposed layout for new Laurel website(2).xlsx"

Purpose	Define functional, content, navigation, maintenance, accessibility, and technical requirements for a redesigned Town of Laurel municipal website.
Primary audience	Residents, property owners, businesses, visitors, civic organizations, elected officials, staff, and people seeking Town services or public records.
Primary navigation	Our Town; Mayor & Council; Departments; Civic Organizations; Applications and Forms; Documents; Resources.
Design objective	A clear, service-oriented municipal website that makes high-demand information and transactions easy to find from desktop and mobile devices.

1. Project Overview

The redesigned Town of Laurel website should function as the Town's primary public information and digital-service portal. The site should emphasize simple navigation, rapid access to frequently used services, timely public information, transparent access to financial and government records, and a structure that Town staff can maintain without specialized web-development skills.

2. Project Goals

- Make the most frequently requested Town services accessible in one or two clicks from the homepage.
- Organize information around resident and visitor needs rather than internal government structure alone.
- Provide reliable access to budgets, audits, budget-to-actual reports, meeting materials, ordinances, forms, notices, and other public documents.
- Support online or fillable forms for permits, licenses, FOIA requests, registrations, and other applications.
- Provide timely alerts, news, calendar information, and opt-in notifications.
- Assign clear maintenance responsibility to content changes as necessary.

3. Information Architecture and Primary Navigation

Primary Section	Purpose
Our Town	Community information, resident information, history, notices, newsletter, transportation, relocation, recreation, charter, trash/recycling and welcome materials.
Mayor & Council	Mayor and Council profiles/contact information, elections, candidate filing information and ward map.
Departments	Finance, Code Enforcement, Public Works, Police, Alderman Court, boards/commissions and committees.
Civic Organizations	Directory of local civic, service, veterans and community organizations with external links.
Applications and Forms	Permits, licenses, registrations, FOIA, employment, voter registration, special-event and other fillable forms.
Documents	Proposals, grants and Town/guest presentations.
Resources	Community, financial, government, health, mental-health, legal and public-safety resources.

4. Homepage Requirements

HP-01 Display the Town of Laurel logo, address and telephone information prominently in the header.

HP-02 Display the Town tagline: "Where good things happen naturally."

HP-03 Provide persistent top-level controls for Notify Me, newsletter signup, Report a Concern, Search and Contact Us.

HP-04 Provide a language-selection control using an appropriate translation service or language selector.

HP-05 Provide the seven primary navigation categories: Our Town, Mayor & Council, Departments, Civic Organizations, Applications and Forms, Documents, and Resources.

HP-06 Provide a prominent Quick Links area for Pay Online, FOIA Request, reporting an urgent issue/outage, Apply for Permit, How Do I?, and FAQs.

HP-07 Provide a rotating photo area that can be updated by authorized Town staff.

HP-08 Provide a News and Events area for Town updates, public works notices, community events and important operational information.

HP-09 Provide a monthly calendar and an Upcoming Events list that can show at least the next three months of events.

HP-10 Calendar entries for public meetings should support links to the corresponding agenda and, when available, meeting materials or recordings.

HP-11 Support a dismissible homepage alert/pop-up for urgent news or important reminders.

HP-12 Notify Me should allow a visitor to submit an email address for important Town notifications.

HP-13 Newsletter signup should support electronic delivery by email and, if the Town continues postal distribution, collection of name and mailing address.

HP-14 Report a Concern should be designated for non-emergency issues such as potholes or code violations and should clearly distinguish emergencies from non-emergencies.

HP-15 Community organizations supplying event information should have a defined submission process and Town staff should retain publishing approval.

5. Section-Level Content Requirements

5.1 Our Town

Page / Menu Item	Content / Buttons	Update Frequency
Menu Link / Button	Buttons	Maintenance / Area
Community Development	LRC Promenade, DDD, Meadowbrook (links to their sites)	Responsibility of organization
History	Write up from current website	One time
Hometown Heros	Process for applying and cost	As necessary
Houses of Worship	List	As necessary
Important Notices (utilities failures)		As necessary
Laurel Library	Direct link	None
Laurel School District	Direct link	None
Laurel Senior Center	Write up of services and activities	None
Newsletter	By issue date	3 times a year
Public Transportation	Dart – direct link	None
Relocating/New Resident	Trash, emergency number, utilities, cable (links if possible)	None
Things to do	Parks, Camping, Kayaking	None
Town Charter	Link to Town Charter document	None
Trash/Recycle	Trash restrictions, what can be recycled, schedule	Every 6 months
Welcome Brochure - link to brochure		As necessary
How to start a business in Laurel		As necessary

5.2 Mayor & Council

Page / Menu Item	Content / Buttons	Update Frequency
Drop Down Menu	Buttons	Maintenance / Area
Mayor - Name, Phone, Email, Mayor's Message		As necessary
Council - Name, Ward, Phone, Email		As necessary
Elections		None
Candidate filing form		None
Ward Map		None

5.3 Departments

Department / Group	Page / Item	Required Content	Update Frequency
Drop Down Menu	Drop Down Menu	Buttons	Maintenance / Area
Finance	Budget	Last 5 FYs	Annually
	Budgeted vs Actual	Each month of the current FY	Monthly

	Annual Audits	Last 5 – 10 FYs	Annually
	Bank Balances (all savings, checking and reserve)	Each month of the current FY	Monthly
	Taxes	Current Tax Rate/Penalties and fines	Annually
Code Enforcement	What is Code Enforcement/Did you know?		As necessary
	Town Code Book		As necessary
	Code Fees Chart	Fees, Fines	Annually
	Code Violation Process		As necessary
	Vacant House Ordinance	Vacant House Ordinance, Fees & Fines List	As necessary
	Policy/penalties for non-payment	Add to taxes, Court, Prison	None
Public Works	What is public works?		As necessary
	Report an Emergency		As necessary
Police	Laurel Police Website (link)		None
Alderman Court	What is the Alderman Court?		As necessary
	Payments		As necessary
Boards and Commission	Planning and Zoning		As necessary
	Comprehensive Plan		As necessary
Boards and Commission	Board of Assessments		As necessary
Committees	Communication Committee	Agendas/Minutes/Documents	As necessary
	Budget Committee	Agendas/Minutes/Documents	As necessary
	Annexation Committee	Agendas/Minutes/Documents	As necessary
	Street Committee	Agendas/Minutes/Documents	As necessary
	Parks & Rec	Agendas/Minutes/Documents	As necessary

NOTE: Each department's initial page should have the same layout. Page should list Department Head name, phone and email address on left side. Right side can be used for "Did you know" or "How do I" relevant to each department.

5.4 Civic Organizations

Organization	External Link / Note	Maintenance
Drop Down Menu	Link	
ARK Educational Resource Center	https://arkeducation.org/	None
Boys & Girls Club (link to website or FB)	https://www.bgclubs.org/clubs/laurel-boys-girls-club	None
General Federation of Women 's Clubs	https://www.gfwcdelaware.org/	None
Historic Society (link to website or FB)	https://laureldehistoricalsociety.org/	None
Hope Masonic Lodge	https://www.facebook.com/hopelodge4/	None
International Organization of Odd Fellows (IOOF)	https://www.facebook.com/hopelodge4/	None
Laurel Women's Civic Club (link to website or FB)	https://www.facebook.com/people/Laurel-Womens-Civic-Club/100085172711030/#	None
Lyons Club	https://www.facebook.com/LaurelDELion/	None
Operation West Laurel (link to webpage or FB)	https://operationwestlaurel.org/	None
Ruritan Club	https://www.orgcouncil.com/ein/510183716	None
Veterans	Link/contact information to be confirmed	None
American Legion,	https://www.facebook.com/groups/621041934212620	As necessary
Vet United Outreach of DE	https://www.facebook.com/VeteransUnitedOutreach/	As necessary

5.5 Applications and Forms

Group	Form / Application	Maintenance
Drop Down Menu	Buttons	Maintenance / Area
Applications	Building Permit - link to fillable form	None
	Business License - link to fillable form	None
	Plumbing Permit - link to fillable form	None
	Rental Permit - link to fillable form	None
	Sign Permit - link to fillable form	None
	Special use, subdivision, zoning change request - link to fillable form	None
	Subdivision - link to fillable form	None
	Variance and Appeal - link to fillable form	None
Forms	Change of address - link to fillable form	None
	Employment - link to fillable form	None
	FOIA Request - link to fillable form	None
	State/County voter registration - link to fillable form	None
	Special event - link to fillable form	None
	Vacancy certification/availability - link to fillable form	None
	Vacant property registration - link to fillable form	None

FORM-01 Where legally and operationally appropriate, forms should be fillable online rather than requiring a user to print and hand-complete a PDF.

FORM-02 Each form should identify the responsible department, submission method, required attachments, fees if applicable, and expected next step.

FORM-03 Forms that collect personal information must use encrypted transmission and appropriate access controls.

5.6 Documents and Presentations

Category	Subcategory	Content
Dropdown Group	Drop Down Menu	Button
Documents	Proposals	DDD Proposal
	Grants	Applications, Awards
Presentations	Town Council Presentations	List by name
	Guest Presentations	List by name

5.7 Resources

Resource Group	Organization / Service	Link	Phone / Notes
Dropdown Group	Drop Down Menu	Link	Phone / Notes
Community Assistance	Community Development Block Grant	https://www.hud.gov/hud-partners/community-cdbg	
	Division of Services Center	https://dhss.delaware.gov/dss/locations/laurel-state-service-center/	302-875-8402
	Energize Delaware (Delmarva Power)	Energizedelaware.org	302-883-3048

	Group Violence Intervention (GVI)	facebook.com/gvidelaware/mentions/	
	HELP Initiative	Helpinitiative.org	302-597-9044
	Laurel Library	Laurel.lib.de.us	302-875-3184
	Laurel Senior Center	sussexcountyde.gov/senior-center-laurel	
	Western Sussex Chamber of Commerce	sussexcountyde.gov/senior-center-laurel	
Financial Assistance	Catholic Charities	sussexcountyde.gov/senior-center-laurel	
	Delmarva Clergy (rent, gas, electric, etc.)	dcusafoundation.org/index.html	
	First State Community Action	https://www.firststatecaa.org/	302-856-7761
Financial Assistance	Good Samaritan	https://www.facebook.com/groups/laureldelawaretownwatch/posts/1840168186789658/	302-875-6943
	Harvest Ministry	https://harvest.org OR https://www.facebook.com/p/Harvest-Ministries-Inc-61574024128188/	302-846-3001
	Sussex County Community Development and Housing	https://sussexcountyde.gov/community-development-housing	
Government	Delaware Government	https://delaware.gov	
	Governor	https://governor.delaware.gov	
	Sussex County Councilman	https://sussexcountyde.gov/matt-lloyd	
	Federal Representatives	https://www.coons.senate.gov/	
		https://www.bluntrochester.senate.gov/	
		https://mcbride.house.gov/	
	State Representatives	https://legis.delaware.gov/AssemblyMember/152/Dukes	
		https://www.delawaresenate.com/member-home/bryantrichardson.htm	
Health	Pregnancy Care Hotline	https://www.sussexpregnancy.com/	877-225-7870
	Social Services	https://dhss.delaware.gov/dss/locations/laurel-state-service-center/laurel/	
	Tidal Health Emergency Clinic	https://www.tidalhealth.org/	
	Vetran's Crisis Line	https://www.veteranscrisisline.net	
	Delaware Health and Human Services	https://dhss.delaware.gov	
Mental Health Assistance	Dr. Harris	https://hopeshelpinghands2llc.org/	443-365-5115
	Kent / Sussex County Counseling Service	NO WEBPAGE	302-877-0825
Legal Assistance	Community Legal Aid Society	declasi.org	

	Victim's Service	https://dsp.delaware.gov/victim-services/	
	Attorney General	https://attorneygeneral.delaware.gov/	
	24/7 Victims Hotline	https://www.delawarevictimservices.org/resources.html%20	
	Domestic Violence Coordinating Council	https://dvcc.delaware.gov/	
Public Safety	Delaware Crime Stoppers	http://delaware.crimestoppersweb.com/sitemenu.aspx?ID=346&	800-847-3333
		Text - Type "KEYWORD" plus your message to CRIMES (274637)	
		Example: KEYWORD John Doe is selling drugs on the corner of Main and Elm streets	

6. Financial Transparency Requirements

FIN-01 Finance must provide adopted budgets for at least the five most recent fiscal years.

FIN-02 Finance must provide annual audited financial statements for at least the five most recent fiscal years.

FIN-03 Provide current-fiscal-year Budget vs. Actual information and update it monthly.

FIN-04 Provide monthly bank-balance information for Town checking, savings and reserve accounts, subject to review for any information that should not be publicly disclosed.

FIN-05 Publish the current tax rate and applicable penalties and fines, with annual review.

FIN-06 Financial documents should be searchable, downloadable and organized consistently by fiscal year and document type.

7. Meetings, Boards, Commissions and Committees

GOV-01 Provide dedicated pages for Planning & Zoning, Board of Assessments, and Town committees identified in the proposed layout.

GOV-02 Committee pages should support agendas, minutes and supporting documents.

GOV-03 Meeting materials should be organized by body and date and should remain available in an archive.

GOV-04 Where recordings are available, the meeting page should provide a direct recording link associated with the correct meeting date.

8. Search, Navigation and Findability

NAV-01 Provide site-wide keyword search that indexes normal pages, public documents, agendas/minutes and forms where technically feasible.

NAV-02 Use consistent page titles, breadcrumbs and section navigation so users can identify their location within the site.

NAV-03 Provide a How Do I? page organized around common tasks such as paying, applying, reporting, finding, registering and contacting.

NAV-04 Provide an FAQ page with expandable questions and links to authoritative pages rather than duplicating information unnecessarily.

NAV-05 External links should be clearly identifiable and periodically checked for broken or outdated destinations.

9. Accessibility and Usability

ACC-01 The website should conform to WCAG 2.2 Level AA to the extent applicable to the Town's web content and services.

ACC-02 All core functionality must be operable by keyboard and compatible with screen readers.

ACC-03 Images conveying information must have meaningful alternative text; decorative images should not create unnecessary screen-reader output.

ACC-04 Text, buttons, links and form controls must meet appropriate color-contrast and visible-focus requirements.

ACC-05 PDFs and other posted documents should be accessible; frequently used forms should be converted to accessible HTML or accessible fillable documents when feasible.

ACC-06 The site must be responsive and usable on common desktops and tablets.

10. Content Management and Staff Administration

CMS-01 Authorized staff must be able to create, edit, schedule, publish, unpublish and archive pages, notices, calendar events and documents without coding.

CMS-02 The CMS should support role-based permissions so staff can maintain assigned sections without unnecessary administrative access.

CMS-03 The CMS should preserve version history or an audit trail for material content changes.

CMS-04 The CMS should support scheduled publishing and expiration for notices, alerts and time-sensitive content.

CMS-05 The Town should define a content owner and review frequency for each major section.

CMS-06 The system should support easy replacement of outdated documents while preserving stable public navigation where practical.

11. Notifications, News and Calendar

COM-01 Support opt-in email notification lists and clear unsubscribe functionality.

COM-02 Allow Town staff to categorize notifications, such as emergencies/urgent notices, general Town news, meetings and newsletters.

COM-03 News posts should support title, date, summary, image, attachments, related links and expiration/archive behavior.

COM-04 Calendar events should support title, body/organization, location, date, start/end time, recurring events, attachments and links.

COM-05 Expired news and past events should move automatically to an archive or past-events view rather than remain mixed with current information.

12. Technical and Security Requirements

TECH-01 Use HTTPS across the entire public site and administrative interface.

TECH-02 Provide secure authentication for administrators and support multi-factor authentication where available.

TECH-03 Maintain routine backups of website content, configuration and uploaded files with a documented recovery process.

TECH-04 Apply security patches and platform updates on a defined schedule.

TECH-05 Use anti-spam and abuse controls on public forms without creating unnecessary accessibility barriers.

TECH-06 Provide analytics for page usage, search terms, popular downloads and form/service usage while respecting applicable privacy requirements.

TECH-07 The site should load efficiently on mobile connections; images should be optimized and modern caching/compression practices used.

TECH-08 Provide a broken-link monitoring process and routine quality checks.

TECH-09 The solution should support redirects from important existing URLs during migration so bookmarks and search-engine links do not unnecessarily break.

13. Content Migration Requirements

MIG-01 Inventory the current Town website before migration and classify each item as migrate, revise, archive or retire.

MIG-02 Migrate current ordinances, codes, budgets, audits, meeting records, forms and other authoritative public records identified for retention.

MIG-03 Remove duplicate, obsolete and superseded content from primary navigation while preserving records that must remain publicly available.

MIG-04 Validate all migrated links, downloads, contact information and forms before launch.

MIG-05 Preserve document dates and meaningful titles so users can distinguish current material from historical material.

14. Acceptance Criteria

Area	Acceptance Standard
Navigation	All seven primary sections and homepage quick links work correctly on desktop and mobile.
Forms	Every published application/form opens correctly, identifies its responsible department, and can be submitted by the stated method.
Search	Search returns relevant pages and documents for representative Town-service queries.
Accessibility	Key templates and representative content pass automated and manual accessibility checks, including keyboard testing.
Documents	Budgets, audits, meeting records and other required public documents are organized, downloadable and correctly labeled.
Calendar	Meetings/events display accurate dates, times, locations and links to associated materials.
Alerts	Authorized staff can publish and dismiss/expire an urgent homepage alert.
Mobile	No core content or functionality is lost at common mobile viewport sizes.
Administration	Designated Town staff can update assigned content without vendor intervention for routine changes.
Migration	Priority legacy URLs are redirected and no critical internal links are broken at launch.

Appendix A. Recommended Content Governance Matrix

Content Area	Suggested Owner	Review Frequency	Control
Homepage alerts/news	Town Manager / designee	As necessary	Remove or archive when no longer current
Calendar	Town Clerk / designee	Weekly / As necessary	Confirm meeting links before publishing
Finance	Finance Department	Monthly / annually	Budget-to-actual and bank balances monthly; budgets/audits annually
Mayor & Council	Town Clerk / Administration	After elections/changes	Verify names, wards, phones and email addresses
Departments	Department heads	Quarterly / As necessary	Review service descriptions, fees and contact information
Applications & Forms	Responsible department	On every policy/form change	Retire superseded versions promptly
Civic Organizations	Administration / Communications	At least annually	Verify external links and contact information
Resources	Administration / Communications	At least annually	Verify phone numbers, agency names and URLs
Accessibility	Site administrator / vendor	Continuous	Check new pages/documents before or shortly after publication

Appendix B

Request for Proposal

Appendix B
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Municipal Website Redesign, Development and Implementation

RFP No. _____

Issuing Agency	Town of Laurel, Delaware
Issue Date	_____
Questions Due	_____
Proposal Due Date / Time	_____
Anticipated Award	_____
Town Contact	_____

Where good things happen naturally

1. Invitation to Submit Proposals

The Town of Laurel, Delaware (the "Town") is soliciting proposals from qualified website design and development firms to redesign, develop, implement, migrate, launch, and support a modern municipal website. The selected firm will provide a user-focused, mobile-responsive, accessible, secure, and easy-to-maintain website that improves public access to Town services, forms, meetings, financial information, notices, community resources, and other public information.

The Town seeks a solution that can be maintained by authorized Town personnel without routine reliance on a vendor for ordinary content updates. Proposers should respond to the functional and content requirements in this RFP and identify any recommended alternatives that would improve usability, accessibility, security, long-term maintainability, or cost.

2. Background and Project Objectives

The Town has developed a proposed information architecture and content layout for the new website. The project is intended to reorganize the website around the information and transactions most frequently needed by residents, property owners, businesses, visitors, civic organizations, elected officials, and Town staff.

- Create a professional and welcoming municipal website with clear, intuitive navigation.
- Make high-demand services reachable quickly from the homepage.
- Improve public access to budgets, audits, budget-to-actual reports, meeting materials, ordinances, forms, notices, presentations, and other records.
- Support online and fillable forms where appropriate.
- Improve the Town's ability to publish news, urgent alerts, meeting information, community events, and email notifications.
- Provide a content management system that nontechnical Town staff can use confidently.
- Meet modern accessibility, mobile usability, security, search, and performance expectations.
- Provide a sustainable structure that can be expanded as the Town's needs change.

3. Anticipated Project Scope

The selected vendor will be expected to provide, at a minimum, the following services:

Workstream	Expected Services
Discovery and Planning	Review existing content, confirm project goals, validate the proposed information architecture, conduct stakeholder discussions as needed, and produce a final project plan.
Information Architecture	Refine the navigation, page hierarchy, content categories, quick links, search structure, and cross-linking between related Town services.
UX/UI Design	Create desktop, tablet, and mobile designs reflecting a professional Town of Laurel identity and emphasizing accessibility and ease of use.
Website Development	Configure or build the website, templates, navigation, search, calendar, news, alerts, forms, document libraries, notifications, and administrative functions.
Content Migration	Migrate approved current content and public documents; identify duplicate, obsolete, superseded, or broken material for Town review.
Forms and Services	Implement fillable or online forms and provide clear submission workflows for permits, applications, registrations, FOIA, employment and related processes.

Workstream	Expected Services
Testing	Perform functional, browser, mobile, accessibility, security, search, form, link, and content testing prior to launch.
Training	Train designated Town staff in routine website administration and content maintenance.
Launch and Transition	Manage production launch, redirects, quality assurance, and transition to Town staff.
Support and Maintenance	Provide post-launch warranty/support and optional ongoing hosting, maintenance, security, accessibility, or enhancement services.

4. Required Website Structure

The proposed primary navigation is as follows. Vendors may recommend refinements but should preserve the intent and content coverage of these sections.

Primary Navigation	Content Intent
Our Town	Community Development; History; Hometown Heroes; Houses of Worship; Important Notices; New Resident Information; Laurel Library; Laurel School District; Laurel Senior Center; Newsletter; Public Transportation; Relocating; Things to Do; Town Charter; Trash/Recycle; Welcome Brochure.
Mayor & Council	Mayor information and message; Council members by ward; elections; candidate filing form; ward map.
Departments	Finance; Code Enforcement; Public Works; Police; Alderman Court; Boards and Commissions; Committees.
Civic Organizations	Local civic, service, veterans, educational and community organizations with external links/contact information.
Applications and Forms	Building, business license, plumbing, rental, sign, land-use, subdivision, variance/appeal, change of address, employment, FOIA, voter registration, special event, vacancy certification and vacant-property registration forms.
Documents	Proposals; grants; Town Council presentations; guest presentations.
Resources	Community assistance; financial assistance; government; health; mental-health; legal-assistance; and public-safety resources.

5. Homepage Requirements

HP-01 Display Town identity, address, phone information and the tagline “Where good things happen naturally.”

HP-02 Provide visible access to Notify Me, Newsletter Signup, Report a Concern, Search and Contact Us.

HP-03 Provide a language-selection/translation control.

HP-04 Provide prominent quick links for Pay Online, FOIA Request, urgent reporting/outage reporting, Apply for Permit, How Do I?, and FAQs.

HP-05 Provide a rotating Town photo/hero area that authorized Town staff can update.

HP-06 Provide News and Events content capable of featuring Town updates, public works notices, urgent operational issues and community events.

HP-07 Provide a monthly calendar and an Upcoming Events area displaying at least the next three months.

HP-08 Public meeting calendar entries must support direct links to agendas and, when available, meeting materials and recordings.

HP-09 Provide a dismissible urgent-news or important-reminder alert/pop-up that Town staff can activate and expire.

HP-10 Notify Me must allow visitors to submit an email address for important Town notifications.

HP-11 Newsletter signup must support electronic subscriptions and, if retained by the Town, collection of postal-delivery information.

HP-12 Report a Concern must be clearly identified for non-emergency concerns and distinguish those matters from emergencies.

HP-13 The website should support a Town-controlled process for publishing community-organization event information.

6. Functional Requirements

6.1 Search and Navigation

FN-01 Provide site-wide keyword search for standard pages and public documents, including agendas, minutes and forms where technically feasible.

FN-02 Provide consistent page titles and local/section navigation.

FN-03 Provide a task-oriented How Do I? area organized around common actions such as pay, apply, report, find, register and contact.

FN-04 Provide an FAQ capability with expandable questions and links to authoritative pages.

FN-05 Support clear distinction between internal pages, downloadable files and external links.

FN-06 Support user-friendly URLs and permanent redirects from important legacy URLs.

6.2 News, Alerts, Calendar and Notifications

COM-01 Authorized staff must be able to create, schedule, publish, edit, expire and archive news items and alerts.

COM-02 News posts should support title, date, summary, image, links and attachments.

COM-03 Calendar events should support date, start/end time, location, organizing body, attachments and links.

COM-04 Past events should automatically move to an archive/past-events view.

COM-05 Support opt-in email notification lists and unsubscribe functionality.

COM-06 The system should allow notification categories such as urgent notices, general Town news, public meetings and newsletters.

6.3 Forms and Online Services

FORM-01 Where legally and operationally appropriate, forms should be fillable online rather than requiring users to print and hand-complete documents.

FORM-02 Forms must identify the responsible department, submission method, required attachments, applicable fees and expected next step.

FORM-03 The solution should support secure transmission of form information and attachments.

FORM-04 Vendor must explain options for workflow routing, confirmation emails, internal notifications, status tracking, payment integration and record export.

6.4 Financial Transparency

FIN-01 Provide adopted budgets for at least the five most recent fiscal years.

FIN-02 Provide annual audited financial statements for at least the five most recent fiscal years.

FIN-03 Provide current-fiscal-year Budget vs. Actual information, updated monthly.

FIN-04 Provide a structure for posting monthly bank balances for Town checking, savings and reserve accounts if approved for publication by the Town.

FIN-05 Publish current tax rates and applicable penalties/fines with annual review.

FIN-06 Financial documents must be organized consistently by fiscal year and document type and be searchable/downloadable.

6.5 Meetings, Boards, Commissions and Committees

GOV-01 Provide pages for Planning and Zoning, Board of Assessments and Town committees.

GOV-02 Committee and board pages must support agendas, minutes and supporting documents.

GOV-03 Meeting materials must be organized by body and date and retained in a public archive.

GOV-04 Where recordings are available, provide a direct link associated with the correct meeting date.

GOV-05 Calendar functionality should distinguish public meetings from community events and support filtering where practical.

7. Accessibility and Mobile Requirements

ACC-01 The website should conform to WCAG 2.2 Level AA and other accessibility requirements applicable to the Town.

ACC-02 All core functionality must be operable by keyboard and compatible with common assistive technologies.

ACC-03 Templates must support appropriate heading structure, form labels, alternative text, visible focus, color contrast and accessible link treatment.

ACC-04 Frequently used documents and forms should be delivered as accessible HTML or accessible documents where feasible.

ACC-05 The website must be fully responsive and usable on common desktop, tablet and smartphone screen sizes.

ACC-06 Vendor must describe its accessibility testing process, remediation process and responsibility for accessibility of vendor-created templates/components.

8. Content Management System Requirements

CMS-01 Town staff must be able to create, edit, schedule, publish, unpublish and archive routine content without coding.

CMS-02 Support role-based permissions and multiple authorized editors.

CMS-03 Provide version history or an audit trail for material content changes.

CMS-04 Support scheduled publishing and automatic expiration of time-sensitive notices.

CMS-05 Provide easy document replacement and organized document libraries.

CMS-06 Provide tools for managing menus, links, images, news, events, alerts, forms and homepage features.

CMS-07 Vendor must identify any proprietary platform limitations, licensing requirements, content export restrictions or vendor lock-in concerns.

CMS-08 Town must retain ownership of its content, documents, images, data and domain-related assets.

9. Technical, Hosting and Security Requirements

TECH-01 Use HTTPS across the entire public website and administrative interface.

TECH-02 Provide secure administrator authentication and multi-factor authentication where available.

TECH-03 Provide routine backups, disaster-recovery capability and a documented restoration process.

TECH-04 Apply platform, security and dependency updates on a defined schedule.

TECH-05 Provide anti-spam and abuse controls for public forms without creating unnecessary accessibility barriers.

TECH-06 Provide website analytics, including page usage, search terms, downloads and service/form usage where practical.

TECH-07 Optimize page performance through image optimization, caching, compression and modern web practices.

TECH-08 Provide a broken-link monitoring process.

TECH-09 Describe hosting architecture, uptime commitment, monitoring, incident response, data location, backup frequency and support escalation.

TECH-10 Identify all third-party services, subscriptions, plugins or licenses required to operate the proposed solution.

10. Content Migration

MIG-01 Inventory existing website content and classify it for migration, revision, archiving or retirement.

MIG-02 Migrate approved ordinances, codes, budgets, audits, meeting records, forms and other authoritative public records.

MIG-03 Remove duplicate, obsolete and superseded content from primary navigation while preserving records the Town elects or is required to retain.

MIG-04 Validate migrated links, downloads, forms, contact information and document titles before launch.

MIG-05 Preserve meaningful dates and titles for historical public records.

MIG-06 Provide a redirect plan for important pages and documents on the existing website.

11. Design Expectations

- Professional municipal appearance using Town branding, photography and appropriate civic imagery.
- Clean visual hierarchy with strong contrast and readable typography.
- Homepage prioritization of high-demand services rather than excessive promotional content.
- Consistent page templates across departments and content types.
- Simple menus that remain usable on mobile devices.
- Design components that Town staff can maintain without undermining the visual system.
- Vendor should provide at least one homepage concept and representative interior-page/mobile designs before full build.

12. Deliverables

No.	Required Deliverable
1	Discovery findings and final project plan
2	Approved sitemap/information architecture
3	Homepage, interior-page and mobile design concepts
4	Configured/developed production-ready website
5	Search, calendar, news, alerts, notification and form functionality
6	Migrated and quality-checked content/documents
7	Accessibility testing and remediation report for vendor-created templates/components
8	Functional/browser/mobile/link/form testing results
9	Redirect list and launch plan
10	Administrator training and written user documentation
11	Post-launch warranty/support period
12	Complete administrative credentials, ownership/transition materials and data/content export procedures

13. Vendor Qualifications

Proposals should demonstrate:

- Experience designing and implementing municipal, county, public-sector, nonprofit or similarly information-intensive websites.
- Experience with accessible website design and WCAG conformance.
- Experience migrating public documents, meeting records and forms.
- Experience training nontechnical content editors.
- Experience providing secure hosting, website maintenance and support, if those services are proposed.
- A project team with clearly identified roles and relevant qualifications.

- At least three references for comparable projects, preferably local-government or public-sector clients.

14. Proposal Response Requirements

To support consistent evaluation, proposals should be organized in the following order:

Proposal Section	Required Content
A. Executive Summary	Brief understanding of the Town's goals and the proposed solution.
B. Firm Qualifications	Company background, years in business, public-sector experience and relevant credentials.
C. Project Team	Names, roles, qualifications and responsibilities of key personnel and subcontractors.
D. Approach and Methodology	Discovery, design, development, content migration, accessibility, testing, training, launch and support approach.
E. Proposed Platform	CMS/platform, hosting model, licensing, integrations, security, accessibility features, ownership and export capabilities.
F. Requirements Response	Respond to each requirement as Included, Configurable, Custom Development, Third-Party/Additional Cost, or Not Available, with explanatory notes.
G. Project Schedule	Proposed phases, milestones, Town responsibilities and estimated implementation timeline.
H. Content Migration	Migration assumptions, quantities included, handling of documents and approach to obsolete/duplicate material.
I. Training and Support	Training format, documentation, warranty, support hours, service levels and optional maintenance.
J. References	At least three comparable clients with contact information.
K. Pricing	Complete implementation and recurring pricing using the pricing schedule below.
L. Exceptions	Clearly identify all exceptions, assumptions, dependencies and items not included in the base price.

15. Pricing Schedule

Pricing should be itemized so the Town can distinguish one-time implementation costs from recurring annual costs and optional services. Vendors may attach their standard pricing detail but should also complete or substantially follow the structure below.

Cost Item	Price	Notes / Assumptions
Discovery / project management	$_____	_____
Information architecture / UX	$_____	_____
Visual design	$_____	_____
CMS / website development	$_____	_____
Content migration	$_____	State quantity/assumptions
Forms / workflow configuration	$_____	State number of forms included
Search / calendar / alerts / notifications	$_____	_____
Accessibility testing/remediation	$_____	_____
Training and documentation	$_____	_____
Launch / redirects / production transition	$_____	_____
First-year hosting	$_____	If applicable
Annual hosting after Year 1	$_____	Recurring
Annual maintenance/support	$_____	Recurring/optional
Third-party licenses/subscriptions	$_____	List each
Optional enhancements	$_____	List each
TOTAL BASE IMPLEMENTATION	$_____	Excluding optional recurring costs

16. Proposed Evaluation Criteria

The Town may evaluate proposals using criteria such as the following. The Town may revise weights before issuance.

Evaluation Factor	Suggested Points
Understanding of Town needs and quality of proposed approach	20
Functional fit and response to requirements	20

Evaluation Factor	Suggested Points
Relevant municipal/public-sector experience and qualifications	15
Usability, design quality and accessibility approach	15
Implementation plan, migration approach and training	10
Technical architecture, security, hosting and support	10
Total cost and long-term value	10
TOTAL	100

17. Demonstration / Interview

The Town may invite one or more proposers to participate in an interview or product demonstration. If requested, the vendor should be prepared to demonstrate the proposed CMS from the perspective of a Town staff editor, including creating a news item, adding a calendar event, posting an urgent alert, replacing a document, editing navigation, publishing a form, assigning permissions and reviewing version history.

18. Anticipated Project Schedule

Milestone	Date
RFP issued	_____
Deadline for vendor questions	_____
Town responses/addendum	_____
Proposals due	_____
Interviews/demonstrations, if held	_____
Vendor selection / notice of intent	_____
Contract approval	_____
Project kickoff	_____
Design approval	_____
Content migration / development complete	_____
User acceptance testing	_____
Target launch	_____

19. Town Responsibilities

- Designate a project manager and appropriate subject-matter contacts.
- Provide timely review and approval of designs, navigation, migrated content and project decisions.
- Provide access to existing website content, public documents, logos, approved photography and other Town-owned materials.
- Identify which content should be migrated, revised, archived or retired.
- Provide or approve final wording for policies, emergency instructions, forms, fees, financial information and departmental content.
- Coordinate staff participation in training and user acceptance testing.

20. Proposal Conditions

The following provisions are recommended for inclusion in the final issued RFP and may be revised by the Town Solicitor or procurement staff:

- The Town reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities, request clarification, negotiate scope and pricing, and cancel or reissue the solicitation when determined to be in the Town's best interest.
- All costs associated with preparing a proposal are the responsibility of the proposer.
- The lowest-priced proposal need not be selected; the Town may select the proposal determined to provide the best overall value.
- Any material exceptions to the RFP must be clearly identified in the proposal.
- The selected vendor will be required to enter into a written agreement acceptable to the Town.
- The final contract should address ownership of content/data, confidentiality, insurance, indemnification, security obligations, termination/transition assistance and any other terms required by the Town.
- Proposers should identify any subcontractors and the portions of work they will perform.
- Proposal validity period: _____ days from the proposal due date.

21. Questions and Proposal Submission

RFP Contact: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Questions must be submitted in writing by the deadline stated in the RFP schedule. Responses affecting the scope or requirements should be issued to all prospective proposers by formal written addendum.

Proposals should be submitted in the format and manner specified by the Town. The final issued RFP should state whether electronic, paper, or both forms of submission are required; the number of copies; file-size limitations; delivery address; and exact due date and time.

Appendix A - Requirements Response Matrix

Vendors should use this matrix, or an equivalent response matrix, to identify how each requirement will be satisfied. Status options: Included; Configurable; Custom Development; Third-Party/Additional Cost; Not Available.

Requirement Range	Category	Vendor Status	Vendor Notes / Additional Cost
HP-01 through HP-13	Homepage		
FN-01 through FN-06	Search and Navigation		
COM-01 through COM-06	News, Calendar, Alerts and Notifications		
FORM-01 through FORM-04	Forms and Online Services		
FIN-01 through FIN-06	Financial Transparency		
GOV-01 through GOV-05	Meetings, Boards, Commissions and Committees		
ACC-01 through ACC-06	Accessibility and Mobile		
CMS-01 through CMS-08	Content Management		
TECH-01 through TECH-10	Technical, Hosting and Security		
MIG-01 through MIG-06	Content Migration		

Appendix B - Content and Maintenance Priorities

Area	Content	Expected Review Cycle
Finance	Budgets - last 5 fiscal years	Annually
Finance	Budget vs. Actual - current fiscal year	Monthly
Finance	Annual audits - last 5 fiscal years	Annually
Finance	Bank balances - current fiscal year	Monthly, if approved for publication
Finance	Tax rates / penalties / fines	Annually
Code Enforcement	Town Code, fees, violation process, vacant-house information	As needed / annually
Committees	Agendas, minutes and supporting documents	As needed
Newsletter	Issues/archive	Approximately three times per year
Trash / Recycling	Rules and recycling guidance	Review at least every six months
Mayor & Council	Names, wards, phone and email	After election or change
Resources / Civic Organizations	External links and contact information	Review at least annually

Report Date	October 12, 2026
Prepared By	Communications Committee
Subject	Communication, community outreach, and Town website modernization

Town of Laurel, Delaware

Communications Committee Report and Website Modernization Recommendations

1. Executive Summary

The Communications Committee was established to identify opportunities to improve communication among the Town of Laurel, the Laurel School District, and our Laurel residents. The Committee consisted of three residents and two Town Council members; a Laurel School District representative was unavailable to participate.

The Committee recommended that our town newsletter be updated and developed a **Welcome to Laurel** brochure. The newsletter received a positive community response, and the Mayor and Town Council approved the brochure, which was printed and recently distributed at a Laurel event.

The Committee's website reviews identified opportunities to improve navigation, accessibility, online services, public information, and security. It recommends replacing the ageing site with a resident-focused municipal website. The most effective way to do that is to utilize current development software to redesign a new website that can meet all requirements and be easily maintained.

Appendix A contains the Website Requirements Document which outlines a detailed website design.

2. Findings

- Website is useful but difficult to navigate.
- Missing access to important public documents (i.e. audits and budget vs actual reports).
- Forms and applications process is outdated. There should be fillable forms online with status tracking capability.
- No comprehensive calendar of events/meetings.
- Missing links to important community resources and civil organizations.

3. Recommended Website Features

The new website should be easy to navigate and maintain, secure, comprehensive and provide fillable forms for online services.

- **Navigation:** Should be intuitive and include search capability, quick links, and reliable access on all devices. A language translation function should also be included.

- **Maintenance:** Should be easy for administrative staff to update monthly reports and documents. Whenever possible, links to relevant sites/information should be utilized to minimize maintenance required by town staff.
- **Secure:** Role-based access, confidentiality, recovery, backups, scheduled publishing, and assigned maintenance.
- **Comprehensive:** Should provide organized access to budgets, audits, financial reports, agendas, minutes, recordings, ordinances, permits, forms, and other public records.
- **Online Services:** Fillable forms for permits, rentals, licenses, concerns, and status tracking.

4. Proposed Website Layout

Attachment 1 approximates the new website home page. Main tabs at the top include:

- **Our Town:** History, community information, newsletters, transportation, schools, services, and notices.
- **Mayor & Council:** Officials, wards, elections, agendas, minutes, and meetings
- **Departments:** Finance, Public Works, Code Enforcement, Alderman's Court, and Police.
- **Civic Organizations:** Local civic organizations.
- **Applications & Forms:** Permits, licenses, registrations, and frequently used forms.
- **Documents:** Important public documents
- **Resources:** Community assistance and social services.

Also included on the home page should be "Quick Links" which will give residents direct access to the most-used services. Finally, a comprehensive calendar and news/events will also be displayed.

Attachment 2 shows the next level of menu options for each of the main tabs listed on the home page.

5. Cost

As a small town, Laurel has funding challenges. During the committee's research, we came across a Delaware State organization that provides website development, training, and maintenance for municipalities at no cost. The organization is the Delaware Government Information Center (GIC). Detailed information on GIC can be found at https://gic.delaware.gov/website-design-and-development-services/. Committee members contacted GIC in June but were advised that GIC was unable to take on any new development efforts at that time. This is obviously a great option for the town. The committee feels that perhaps if Town Management were to contact them, GIC might be more responsive. Even if there is a waiting list, the fact that it would not cost the town money makes it an excellent option.

Tim Smith from Delmarva Digital presented his thoughts in a workshop held in May. The Committee advised him that we were looking at a very similar website to the one they developed for Georgetown. Without more detailed requirements, Mr. Smith could only provide a range of costs from $15,000 to $50,000.

In the absence of being able to use GIC, the Committee would recommend a competitive bid process to get the best value. The Committee has generated a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) and it is provided in Appendix B.

6. Recommended Actions

1. Re-engage GIC about no-cost assistance or placement on a waiting list. If GIC is unavailable, utilize attached RFP to solicit competitive bids. The draft RFP was developed with AI assistance and should be reviewed and verified before use**.** Recommend Town management confirm Charter, procurement, bidding, and legal requirements are met before finalizing the RFP. **The website requirements document and RFP should be updated as the town finalizes its objectives and scope. If requirements are modified, the RFP will need to reflect those changes.**
2. Finalize project objectives, scope, priorities, and requirements for accessibility, security, services, and content management.
3. Review existing website content and decide what to migrate, revise, archive, or remove.
4. Set an affordable budget for implementation, hosting, maintenance, licensing, training, security, and updates. Funding is better spent on developing a new website with current software and more capabilities.

7. Conclusion

The Committee recommends a comprehensive redesign and replacement of the existing town website rather than continued incremental updates. A modern website would improve public access to information, simplify navigation, expand online services, strengthen security, and reduce routine maintenance demands while supporting the Town's future needs.

The immediate priorities are to revisit the no-cost GIC option, finalize the town's requirements, and pursue competitive proposals, if necessary. Establishing the Communications Committee as a permanent standing committee would provide continuity and ongoing oversight of the town's communication initiatives.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Website Requirements Document **-** Outlines the recommended design and functional requirements for the new website.

Appendix B: Draft Request for Proposal (RFP) - Contains a Request for Proposal template which can easily be tailored as the website needs evolve.

Attachment 1: Home Page

TOWN OF LAUREL
Delaware
Great Things Come Naturally

Notify Me | Contact Us | Translate

Search townoflaurel.net

Our Town | Mayor and Council | Departments | Civic Orgs | Applications | Documents | Resources



Pay Bills Online | Report an Outage | FOIA Request | Apply for Permit | How do I | FAQ

News & Announcements



Laurel Independence Celebration
Join us July 4th at the Cannery Park for live music, food trucks, activities, and fireworks!
JUN 10, 2025



Road Work on Central Avenue
Utility work will begin next week. Please expect temporary lane closures.
JUN 9, 2025



Bulk Trash Collection
Bulk trash collection will be held June 23-27. Click to view acceptable items and guidelines.
JUN 5, 2025

Upcoming Events

VIEW CALENDAR

JUN 16 — **Town Council Meeting**
6:30 PM
Laurel Town Hall

JUN 21 — **Farmers Market**
8:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Central Avenue

JUN 28 — **Movie in the Park**
8:15 PM
Cannery Park

VIEW FULL CALENDAR

June 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Council Meeting | Event | Holiday

201 Mechanic Street,
Laurel, DE 19956

(302) 875-3800
laureltm@comcast.net

Mon – Fri 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

STAY CONNECTED

Attachment 2:
Website Menu
Structure

Town of Laurel DELAWARE

Where good things happen naturally

WEBSITE MENU STRUCTURE

Our Town
- Community Development
- History
- Hometown Heros
- Houses of Worship
- Important Notices
- Information for New Residents
- Laurel Library
- Laurel School District
- Laurel Senior Center
- Newsletter
- Public Transportation
- Relocating
- Things to do
- Town Charter
- Trash/Recycle
- Welcome Brochure

Mayor & Council
- Mayor
- Council
- Elections
- Candidate filing form
- Ward Map

Departments
- Alderman Court
- Boards and Commissions
- Code Enforcement
- Committees
- Finance
- Police
- Public Works

Civic Organizations
- ARK Educational Resource Center
- Boys & Girls Club
- General Federation of Women's Clubs
- Historic Society
- Hope Masonic Lodge
- International Organization of Odd Fellows (IOOF)
- Laurel Women's Civic Club
- Lyons Club
- One Laurel
- Operation West Laurel
- Ruritan Club
- Veterans

Forms & Applications
- Forms
  - Change of address
  - Employment
  - FOIA Request
  - State/County voter registration
  - Special event
  - Vacancy certification/ availability
  - Vacant property registration
- Applications >
  - Building Permit
  - Business License
  - Plumbing Permit
  - Rental Permit
  - Sign Permit
  - Special use, subdivision, zoning change request
  - Subdivision
  - Variance and Appeal

Documents & Presentations
- Grants
- Guest Presentations
- Proposals
- Town Council Presentations

Resources
- Community Assistance
- Financial Assistance
- Government
- Health
- Mental Health Assistance
- Legal Assistance
- Public Safety

Summary of the GIC Mission Statement

🎯 Mission

The Delaware Department of State created the **Government Information Center (GIC)** to ensure citizens have **free, equal, and convenient access to government information.** Its core purpose is to **use the power of the internet to connect citizens with their government.**

👥 Who They Are

The GIC is a small, specialized team that includes:

- Web developers and designers
- Information systems managers
- Graphic designers
- Video producers
- Other digital communication professionals

They collaborate with state and local agencies to improve how government information is delivered online.

🛠️ Key Tasks and Responsibilities

The GIC fulfills its mission through several major activities:

🌐 1. Managing Delaware.gov

- Maintains, updates, and enhances the state's main web portal.
- Uses modern web tools and trends to improve access to government information.

🗂️ 2. Providing Access to Government Resources

- Ensures citizens can easily find online information from **state, local, and federal** agencies.

🧭 3. Advising Government Agencies

- Offers guidance on:
  - Online content management
  - Social media usage
  - Publishing services

- Promotes statewide web publishing standards aligned with the Department of Technology and Information (DTI).

👨🏫 4. Training Government Staff

- Teaches state and local employees how to use:
  - Web publishing tools
  - Social media effectively
  - Modern communication strategies
- Helps ensure state websites are accessible to people with disabilities.

🎨 5. Creative and Branding Services

- Designs logos, press materials, and branding assets for state agencies.

📊 6. Expanding Public Access

- Advocates for greater transparency and access through initiatives like **Open Data**.

If you'd like, I can also create:

- A shorter summary
- A bullet-point study guide
- A rewritten version in simpler language
- A comparison with another mission statement

Just tell me what you need next.

GIC Web Desing and Development

Features Provided

- Feature upcoming meetings
- Post Meeting Minutes
- Public Notices
- Spotlights
- Calendar
- Events listing
- News posts
- Embed videos
- Embed audio
- Embed Google Calendars
- Built in SEO
- Contact forms
- Assign user levels for editing the website
- Photo gallery or integration of a Flickr account
- User friendly for non-technical people
- Custom design and style
- Ability to control the navigational structure
- Add additional pages as needed
- It's Free! (design & development)
- Free Training (a training session in person, and phone & email support from GIC staff)

Services Not Available

- Email services (need a third party option, or free Gmail account, Yahoo account, etc.
- Online bill pay (can link to third party solution), some towns use services like officialpayments.com
- Can not promote local businesses on .gov address* (note this is not the same as promoting a town-wide yard sale, parade, etc. Those things are allowed.)

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Local Municipalities Supported by the GIC

- Ardencroft (https://ardencroft.delaware.gov/)
- Ardentown (https://ardentown.delaware.gov/)
- Bethel (https://bethel.delaware.gov)
- Blades (https://blades.delaware.gov)
- Bowers Beach (https://bowersbeach.delaware.gov)
- Bridgeville (https://bridgeville.delaware.gov)
- Camden (https://camden.delaware.gov)
- Cheswold (https://cheswold.delaware.gov)
- City of New Castle (https://newcastlecity.delaware.gov)
- Dagsboro (https://dagsboro.delaware.gov)
- Dover/Kent County MPO (https://doverkentmpo.delaware.gov)
- Ellendale (https://ellendale.delaware.gov)
- Felton (https://felton.delaware.gov)
- Fenwick Island (https://fenwickisland.delaware.gov)
- Frankford (https://frankford.delaware.gov)
- Frederica (https://frederica.delaware.gov)

- Greenwood (https://greenwood.delaware.gov)
- Harrington (https://harrington.delaware.gov)
- Hartly (https://hartly.delaware.gov)
- Henlopen Acres (https://henlopenacres.delaware.gov)
- Kenton (https://kenton.delaware.gov)
- Leipsic (https://leipsic.delaware.gov/)
- Little Creek (https://littlecreek.delaware.gov)
- Magnolia (https://magnolia.delaware.gov)
- Milton (https://milton.delaware.gov)
- New Castle Municipal Services (https://newcastlemsc.delaware.gov)
- Newport (https://newport.delaware.gov)
- Odessa (https://odessa.delaware.gov)
- Selbyville (https://selbyville.delaware.gov)
- Slaughter Beach (https://slaughterbeach.delaware.gov)
- South Bethany (https://southbethany.delaware.gov)

Using the Delaware Government Information Center (GIC) as a web provider offers the Town of Laurel a highly secure, cost-effective, and standardized web presence designed for accessibility. The GIC utilizes a WordPress-based CMS and the new "Lighthouse" design system, which is tailored for Delaware municipalities.

 Delaware.gov +2

Here are the pros and cons based on the GIC's services:

Pros

- **Cost-Effective and Budget-Friendly:** The GIC offers website design and development, specifically for municipalities, which can be significantly cheaper than hiring private vendors.
- **Accessibility and Legal Compliance:** GIC sites are built to comply with WCAG 2.1 AA standards, ensuring compliance with state and federal accessibility regulations (which is crucial for meeting April 2026/2027 deadlines).
- **Trust and Security:** Using a .gov domain, supported by GIC's hosting, enhances trust among residents and protects against impersonation.
- **Modernized Design System (Lighthouse):** The Lighthouse system ensures a consistent, modern visual aesthetic that is optimized for usability across devices.
- **Built-in Functionality:** GIC offers integrated payment systems (Go DE) and public meeting calendars, tailored to government needs.
- **Maintenance Support:** The GIC assists with maintenance, reducing the IT burden on small town staff.

 Delaware.gov +7

Cons

- **Limited Customization:** To maintain a "common look and feel" (CLF4) across Delaware, towns have limited control over the overall design, which may not allow for a unique brand identity.
- **Standardized Functionality:** While they offer many tools, the site may not support highly specific or bespoke functionality tailored solely to Laurel's unique needs, as it must fit within the state's WordPress ecosystem.
- **Dependency on State Schedule:** Redesigns or major updates are dependent on the GIC's migration schedule to the Lighthouse design system.
- **Content Management Learning Curve:** While WordPress is popular, town staff will need to learn the specific, specialized GIC WordPress structure to make updates.



Delaware.gov +4

Summary for Laurel

If the Town of Laurel prioritizes a professional, secure, and compliant site with low maintenance costs, the GIC is an excellent option. However, if the town requires a highly creative or completely custom website, a private vendor might be better suited, despite the higher cost.