

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting
January 21, 2025

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor John Shwed, President of Council Chris Calio, Carlos Oliveras, Robin Fisher-Cornish via ZOOM, George Lodato, and Donald Holden via ZOOM. Also, in attendance were Director of Code Enforcement Ken West, Public Works Director James Foskey, Chief Robert Kracyla, Judge Ruffin, Finance Manager Melissa Cassimore, Recording Secretary Alexis Oliphant, and Town Manager Jamie Smith via ZOOM. It was noted that Councilman Jonathan Kellam was absent.

Mayor Shwed opened the public hearing at 7:02 p.m. The purpose of holding the public hearing is to consider a change to an unimproved alleyway that runs West Sixth Street and Seventh Street in the area of 216 & 218 West Sixth Street and 227 & 229 Seventh Street. The proposed change is to make the alleyway a non- thru alleyway, blocking the alleyway at the rear of the properties referenced above. Town Manager Smith advised the Street Committee met in November to review the alleyway and recommended to close alleyway mid-way. She stated the public hearing was advertised and property owners were notified. Mayor Shwed opened the hearing for public comment. Mr. Ken Athey, resident of 216 West Sixth Street stated his property borders the alleyway way and he strongly urged the town to close the alleyway due to safety reasonings. Mayor Shwed stated with there being no further questions or comments he closed the public hearing. The Public Hearing Closed at 7:10 p.m.

Mayor Shwed stated Mr. Charlie Kistler from Help Initiative is in attendance to provide an update. Mr. Kistler provided a Violent Crime Reduction Initiative Handout for Mayor & Council's review. He stated their organization receives funding from the Criminal Justice Council to help support the projects here in the Town of Laurel and in the City of Seaford. He explained that the three core points to assist the towns include (1.) Geographical, (2.) Statistical, and (3.) G.E.O. Fix. He also reviewed there focus areas: Safer Community, Public Safety, Residential Engagement, Program Awareness, Trust Building, Data Evaluation & Analysis, Technology, and Impact w/Children. Mr. Kistler stated the light-up initiative has resulted in 19,000 energy efficient light bulbs through out the state. They're currently working on supplying keychains to the elderly that displays a high decimal noise for safety. It was noted that residents are not charged for supplies. Chief Kracyla stated Mr. Kistler's team is bridging a gap and building relationships within the community. Reverend Ross from Seaford stated this is a great program and it makes him feel safe within his home. Mrs. Amy Handy stated Help Initiative is not a new program in our community and they came to our rescue in 2023. Mrs. Ann Davis, resident of Pine Street, inquired how the organization gets involved with the police department. Mr. Kistler stated it starts with criminal activity, and they work in these concentrated areas to make them feel safe. The Mayor & Council thanked Mr. Kistler for his great work within the town.

The Mayor & Council Regular and Closed Session Minutes of December 16, 2024, were presented for review. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the regular and closed session

minutes of December 16, 2024. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

The December 2024 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Director of Code Enforcement West stated he had no additions to his report.
- Public Works Director Foskey stated he had no additions to his report.
- Chief Kracyla stated the police department has implemented the Delaware PDP (police diversion program) into patrol for mental health and crisis management.
- Judge Ruffin stated she had no additions to her report.
- Finance Manager Cassimore stated 70%-, 71%-, and 52%-line items should be bolded.
- Town Manager Smith stated she had no additions to her report. She reminded everyone the police department will be holding their open house on Saturday, February 8, 2025.

Councilman Oliveras made a motion to accept the December Department Head Reports as presented. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith presented the Development Updates.

- **Wawa:** They have submitted Infrastructure Plans to DNREC, in which they have received approval.
- **Whaley Property, 180 Apartments:** They're waiting for Soil Conservation's approval.

Mayor Shwed presented Resolution 2025-1, pertaining the Alleyway between 7th and 7th Street. Mayor Shwed stated a resolution proposing that the Town of Laurel change the street structure of an unimproved plotted alleyway which runs from East to West located between 2016 & 218 West Sixth Street and 227 & 229 Seventh Street, by making the alleyway a non-thru street. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept Resolution 2025-1. President of Council Calio seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Mayor Shwed presented the Personnel Policy Amendment pertaining a Social Media Policy. Town Manager Smith stated the request came from a councilperson as the town didn't have a social media policy in place. She stated she reviewed the City of Seaford's policy as a reference. The social media policy will dictate what a town employee can post or can't post on social media. She advised copies will be provided to all personnel with an employee signature required in agreeing to the new policy. Mayor Shwed state the Mayor & Council has reviewed the amendment and supportive of the new policy. President of Council Calio made a motion to

accept the personnel policy amendment pertaining to a Social Media Policy. Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith stated the town was notified that they were a recipient of a Delaware Park Grant in the amount of \$137,500, where a match is not required. The grant will be utilized on West Street, the former Lorraine Shop, to help repave and to remove tree limbs and brush to have a clear view towards Roger C. Fisher Park. Town Manager Smith advised the Mayor & Council must accept the recipient of the grant with the amount mentioned above by Resolution 2025-2. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the Delaware Park Grant/Resolution 2025-2 in the amount of \$137,500. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 6-0, with Councilman Kellam absent.

Mayor Shwed thanked the town staff for keeping our streets clear with the record snow fall.

Mayor Shwed submitted his Laurel Progress 2024 to the Laurel Star.

Mayor Shwed announced he is seeking re-election for one final term as the Town of Laurel's Mayor at this year's upcoming municipal election.

Councilman Oliveras stated it's important to celebrate progress and thanked everyone for their hard work.

Councilman Lodato thanked all the town employees for their service. He advised everyone if they have a concern please bring forward to the Mayor & Council instead of posting on social medial.

Councilman Lodato stated he attended End Community Violence presented by Mrs. Handy, which was another positive step forward.

Councilman Lodato stated the Friends of the Laurel Library are holding a fundraiser at Abbotts where 15% of the sales will be donated to the Friends of the Laurel Library.

President of Council Calio stated the town staff did an excellent job on clearing the streets.

Councilman Holden thanked the town staff for the snow removal.

Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish reiterated the appreciation of town staff for snow removal and the continuing work Mrs. Handy is doing.

Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish acknowledged Mayor Shwed's work and his attendance at every event that has been offered and his representation of the town.

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Pastor Webster from Capital Ministries offered a prayer for going into 2025.

Mrs. Ann Davis, resident of Pine Street, inquired the time of the L.P.D. Open House. Mayor Shwed stated it's from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

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

Regular Session Adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary