

The Town of Laurel
Mayor & Council Meeting
December 16, 2024

A Mayor & Council Meeting was held at Laurel Town Hall in the Mayor & Council Chambers on Monday, December 16, 2024, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were in attendance Mayor John Shwed, President of Council Chris Calio, Carlos Oliveras, George Lodato, and Donald Holden. 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. It was noted that Councilwoman Robin Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Jonathan Kellam were absent.

Mayor Shwed stated Mr. Charlie Kistler from Help Initiative is not attendance and if he arrives, he may give his presentation to Mayor & Council.

Mayor Shwed stated Mrs. Amy Handy and Mrs. Crystal Whitney are in attendance tonight to provide an update pertaining Operation West Laurel. Mrs. Handy stated Operation West Laurel has been in existence for 2 years. She thanked the town in providing the speed bumps on 7th street and has received feedback that it has slowed the traffic down and would like to explore other areas in the spring. They're continuing to hold monthly Laurel Calls that are organized by social contracting to help enforce kids' safety and kids' engagement. The meetings include partners such as the Delaware State Police, local police, Department of Justice, and Boys & Girls Club. She explained the last meeting was held in December due to the contract expiring and she is hopeful the contract will be picked-up to continue monthly calls. She stated she attended the ECVN launch in Wilmington where 80 stakeholders were in attendance to help grow gun violence reduction throughout the state. She will be serving as Vice Chair, and the Executive Director will be downstate in January. Mrs. Handy thanked Mrs. Whitney for continuation of prayer walks throughout Operation West Laurel's 2-years existence. She stated they will be launching O.W.L. a project that will serve students in West Laurel and Wexford Village where they will meet two days a week to provide enrichment to students. Mayor Shwed thanked Mrs. Handy and Mrs. Whitney for their efforts in helping making our community safer. Chief Kracyla stated Mrs. Handy is doing valuable hard work within the town.

The Mayor & Council Public Hearing Minutes of November 18, 2024, were presented for review. Councilman Oliveras made a motion to accept the public hearing minutes of November 18, 2024. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Kellam absent.

The Mayor & Council Regular and Closed Session Minutes of November 18, 2024, were presented for review. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the regular and closed session minutes of November 18, 2024. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Kellam absent.

The November 2024 Department Head Reports were presented for review.

- Director of Code Enforcement West stated he had no additions or changes to his report.

- Public Works Director Foskey stated he had no additions to his report.
- Chief Kracyla stated Officer Handy was nominated for SRO Officer of the Year where the ceremony included several elected officials. He inquired if Officer Handy could be recognized at Mayor & Council Meeting for his hard work. He advised the police department will participate in Mental Health Awareness offered by Delaware State Police. He stated probation parole will be assigned a 2-unit team in Sussex County, and he is working on housing them at L.P.D. They're continuing working on the FLOCK camera project with 21 cameras proposed.
- Judge Ruffin stated she had no additions to her report.
- Finance Manager Cassimore stated she had no additions to her report.
- Town Manager Smith stated the police department officially moved into their new department last week. An Open House is scheduled for Saturday, February 8, 2025, with guest speakers and scheduled tours. The time is still to be determined, and the public will be required to sign-up for a tour. She advised finalization of details will be provided shortly.

President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the November Department Head Reports as presented. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith presented the Development Updates.

- ***Kearsarge Solar Energy Form:*** At December's P&Z Meeting a public hearing was held where they received their Preliminary Site Plan Approval. There next step is to receive all state permits with a Final Site Plan submittal for approval.

Town Manager Smith presented the Report of the Alleyway between 6th Street and 7th Street. She advised the Street Committee consisting of Councilpersons Holden and Oliveras met with herself and Public Works Director Foskey pertaining the alleyway. It was noted that Councilman Kellam was unable attend in person but had already inspected the area prior to the meeting. After a brief discussion, they recommended to close the alleyway midway to still allow access to the backyards of the four homes adjacent to the alley. She stated post and chains with appropriate signage will be designated in the area that states, "No Through Traffic," with emergency vehicles still being able to access the alley. The proposal was shared with Chief Kracyla and Councilman Kellam whom both supported the recommendation. She advised if Mayor & Council elect to approve the proposal a public hearing will be scheduled with notifications sent to the property owners adjacent to the alleyway. Councilman Lodato made a motion to accept the proposal of the Street Committee to close the alleyway between 6th and 7th street mid-way. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith presented the Update on Hometown Hero Banners. She advised with Mayor & Council permission to move forward with the project she received samples of the banners and price quotes. She advised the price is \$140.00 per banner where families can begin purchasing the first of year with a minimum of 5 per order. Councilman Lodato inquired an update on the bulldog banners. Town Manager Smith advised the school would like to have bulldog banners where she would need to reach out to the flag company for a cost estimate.

Mayor Shwed presented the Appointment of Board of Adjustment. Town Manager Smith proposed to appoint Mrs. Mary Lewis to the Board of Adjustments to fill a vacancy. She advised Mrs. Lewis's background includes maintaining the building and zoning guidelines for the Town of Ocean City. She also oversees planning, designing, contracts, and the building process for James E. LaRue Inc. Town Manager Smith stated per state zoning a member of the Board of Adjustment must have a background in construction and zoning. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the appointment of Mrs. Mary Lewis for the Board of Adjustments. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish absent and Councilman Kellam absent.

Mayor Shwed presented the January & February 2025 Mayor & Council Meeting Dates. Town Manager Smith proposed Mayor & Council in meeting twice in January 2025 with the first meeting being held on Monday, January 6, 2025, and the second the meeting being held on Tuesday, January 21, 2025. Town Manager Smith proposed Mayor & Council to meet once in February 2025 with the first meeting being held open if needed on Monday, February 3, 2025, and to meet the second meeting of the month being held on Tuesday, February 18, 2025. Councilman Oliveras made a motion to accept the January & February 2025 Mayor & Council Meeting Dates. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Kellam absent.

Mayor Shwed presented the Appointment of Board of Elections. Town Manager Smith stated the Town of Laurel Mayor & Council Election is scheduled for Thursday, March 27, 2025. The election will be held at the Laurel Fire Department from 1:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. The following terms will be expiring: Mayor – John Shwed, At-Large – Donald Holden, Council Ward 2 – Robin Fisher-Cornish, and Council Ward 3- Jonathan Kellam. Anyone wishing to run for office will need to file by February 20, 2025. You must be a resident of the specific ward and a resident of the Town of Laurel for a minimum of 30 days and must be registered at the Department of Election in Sussex County. She explained candidates must be up to date on all town bills in order to run. A Board of Election needs to appoint by Mayor Shwed with approval by council and the following persons have agreed to serve: Inspector – Valerie Crockett, Judge – Brent Boyce, Judge – Garrett Pusey, Clerk – Vatina Hooper, and Clerk – Alexis Oliphant. Councilman Holden made a motion to accept the Appointment of Board of Elections. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish absent and Councilman Kellam absent.

Town Manager Smith stated the Board of Elections fee is \$25.00 and she proposes to increase the fee to \$125.00. President of Council Calio made a motion to accept the proposed increase of the Board of Election fee of \$125.00. Councilman Holden seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Kellam absent.

Chief Kracyla stated he contacted one of Mr. Kistler's assistants and stated he would like to be, and put on the January 21, 2025, Agenda.

Councilman Oliveras thanked Operation West Laurel for their hard work and wished them the best.

Councilman Lodato thanked the town staff and the police department for their hard work.

Councilman Lodato complimented Operation West Laurel's time and energy.

Councilman Lodato thanked all the residents who came out to attend tonight's meeting.

Mayor Shwed stated the town is moving forward with the completion of Tidewater Park, the construction of the Rigbie and the Globe Building, and the construction of the 4 new homes on S. Central Avenue.

Mayor Shwed stated he attended the Wreaths of America this past weekend where elected officials were in attendance.

Sussex County Council Elect Matt Lloyd stated he will be serving the 1st District for Sussex County Council, and his goal is to represent Laurel well. He stated he would like to attend any public events when they occur.

Mr. Jim LaRue inquired what streets will the Hometown Banners reside on. Town Manager Smith stated part of Central Avenue, Market Street, and 6th Street.

Mr. Don D'Aquila wished everyone Happy Holidays and thanked Public Works Director Foskey and his team with a sewer blockage.

Mr. LaRue thanked the town for what they do and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Councilman Lodato made a motion to hold a closed session to discuss personnel matters. Councilman Oliveras seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Kellam absent.

Regular Session Recessed at 7:38 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened at 8:03 p.m.

Mayor & Council Meeting
December 16, 2024
Page. 5

With there being no further business, Councilman Oliveras made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Lodato seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0, with Councilwoman Fisher-Cornish and Councilman Kellam absent.

Regular Session Adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Mayor

President of Council

Town Manager

Recording Secretary