



Town of Laurel Park  
Town Council Regular Meeting  
July 15, 2025, at 9:30 AM  
441 White Pine Drive, Laurel Park, NC 28739

The following were present:

- Mayor O'Cain
- Mayor Pro Tem Banta
- Commissioner Bridges
- Town Manager Reeves
- Town Clerk Banks
- Police Chief Trotter
- Public Works Director Johnson
- Philip Wiehe
- John Pezzano

The following were absent:

- Commissioner Bonnema
- Fire Chief Garren

### **Call to Order**

Mayor O'Cain called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Public Comment**

Town Clerk Banks announced that two people were present for public comment: Philip Wiehe and John Pezzano.

### **Philip Wiehe's Comment**

Mr. Wiehe reported on the progress of the Steering Committee's work. Mr. Wiehe mentioned that they had gone through most of the matrix and were now making some changes. He highlighted two areas they would focus on in the next two meetings: transportation and specific land use. He noted that Land of Sky would be providing a map showing all available or developable land.

Mr. Wiehe also brought up a matter concerning committee membership. Mr. Wiehe recommended that Tim Culberson, the business partner of Avere Refslaughe (owner of GAM), be appointed to the committee. Mr. Wiehe explained that Mr. Culberson was well-

informed about the town, Henderson County, and the Ecusta Trail, and they are very keen to expand the property along the corridor.

Mayor O'Cain acknowledged the recommendation and said to proceed with the appointment of Tim Culberson.

### **John Pezzano's Comment**

Mr. Pezzano presented an offer to donate up to \$100,000 to the town for the purpose of purchasing a one-acre area adjacent to Laurel Park Place and converting it into a park for town residents. He explained that this would provide a flat, green space in the commercial area, which is currently lacking.

Mr. Pezzano outlined his conditions for the donation:

- The area must be made into a permanent park.
- The town should seek additional funding from neighboring businesses that would benefit from the park.

He provided some background on the property, mentioning that it was previously offered for sale by Dr. Medina for \$400,000 and later purchased by a dermatologist for approximately \$200,000. Mr. Pezzano noted that the current cost of the property is about \$200,000. The property location is currently owned by Hendersonville Dermatology Land Holdings LLC which is adjacent to Laurel Park Place off of Pisgah Drive.

Mayor O'Cain stated that they would not take any action on this proposal today.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

Mayor O'Cain noted that there was an additional item to be added to the agenda: item 6D, Fire Marshal Memorandum of Understanding, to be presented by Town Manager Reeves. He also mentioned that item 6E, Block Grant, would be incorporated into Town Managers Reeves' discussion.

*Motion: Commissioner Bridges moved to approve the agenda as amended. All voted in favor of the motion.*

### **Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included the May Monthly Report and the minutes from June 12th, 17th, and 26th of 2025.

*Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Banta moved to approve the consent agenda. All voted in favor of the motion.*

### **New Business**

#### **A. Resolution to Approve North Carolina Cashflow Loan Agreement, Promissory Note, and Associated Agreements (Round II)**

Town Manager Reeves presented information on the North Carolina Department of Treasurer Cashflow Loan Program round II. She explained that the town had received approximately \$1.5 million from round I, and in this second round, they requested between \$6-8 million but received just shy of \$1 million.

Town Manager Reeves clarified that this was a zero-interest loan, with 40% of the \$997,000 to be repaid to the State Treasurer's Department by June 30, 2030. The funds are to be used for disaster response activities related to the hurricane.

*Motion: Commissioner Bridges moved to approve the receipt of the loan. All voted in favor of the motion.*

Following the approval, there was a discussion about the town's current financial situation, including the fund balance and various funding sources available for disaster recovery and infrastructure repairs.

## **B. Budget Amendments**

Town Manager Reeves presented a budget amendment to formally recognize and appropriate the funding received from the State Treasurer Bridge Loan Program Round II, amounting to \$997,840.48. This funding will be used to support ongoing recovery efforts by providing necessary contractual services.

*Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Banta moved to approve the budget amendment. All voted in favor of the motion.*

## **C. Blue Ridge ABC Board Member Appointment**

Town Clerk Banks presented information about the Blue Ridge ABC board, which is composed of 5 members serving 3-year staggered terms. She explained that the Town Council of Laurel Park appoints 2 of these members.

*Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Banta moved to approve Paul Bakke for the Blue Ridge ABC board. All voted in favor of the motion.*

## **D. Fire Marshal Memorandum of Understanding**

Town Manager Reeves presented a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Henderson County Emergency Services regarding fire inspections. She explained that the county needs to hire a new fire marshal due to the growth in commercial and residential districts. As part of this, the Henderson County Board of Commissioners adopted an inspection fee of \$100 per occupancy during June 2025.

Town Manager Reeves clarified that Laurel Park's contribution to this shared position would be \$5,200 per year.

*Motion: Commissioner Bridges moved to approve the memorandum of understanding with the Henderson County Fire Marshal. All voted in favor of the motion.*

## **Department Head Reports**

### **A. Public Works**

Public Works Director Johnson reported on various activities undertaken by the Public Works department:

- Clean up of 4 fallen trees on the roadway.
- Spent significant time cleaning up Laurel Green Park.

- Cleaned up slides near Mr. Burgess' house.
- New Hire Boff started last week.
- All Public Works new hires will get flagger certified in August along with a recertification for employees that are about to expire.
- Discussed ongoing issues with debris removal and the need to communicate with residents about the end of county-provided debris removal.
- Mentioned various maintenance tasks, including spraying kudzu, roadside mowing, and culvert replacement, Patching pavement.

Town Manager Reeves will talk to John Mitchell and find out if Henderson County is still in the process of picking up Helene debris and when that will end. Town Council discussed strategies for completing the debris removal, with a consensus to have the Public Works crew finish the job without waiting for county reimbursement.

## **B. Fire Department**

No report was given for the Fire Department.

## **C. Police**

Police Chief Trotter provided updates on several matters:

- Reported on efforts to assist a woman living in a church parking lot, mentioning that progress was being made in connecting her with resources.
- Discussed the ongoing issue with the abundance of kittens in the area and having a difficult time finding homes for them since the shelters are full.
- Announced that the Police Department is fully staffed, now that new Officer Thompson has joined the team.

There was a discussion about potentially creating an ordinance to prohibit overnight sleeping in vehicles, particularly considering the upcoming Ecusta Trail opening.

## **Mayor and Commissioner Comments**

The Commissioners and Mayor discussed various topics:

- The need for more communication with elected officials about the town's situation
- Grand Opening of the Ecusta Trail is Friday July 18, 2025, at 2:00 PM
- Updates on discussions with Chuck Edwards and other representatives regarding potential funding and support
- The upcoming 1368 meeting and topics to be discussed
- The recent interviews for a new council member to replace Mayor Pro Tem Hansen
- Received a message from Mrs. Rimbault regarding the sewer line underneath the Augusta Trail and potential financial support from the town

## **Administration**

Town Manager Reeves provided updates DOT roundabouts Hwy 64 update she was in touch with Resident Engineer Patrick he said the project is nicely underway and the prime contractor has been onsite clearing and grubbing and installing erosion control devices from

White Pine to Glasgow. Utility companies are still onsite relocating existing utilities back to the new right of way line to allow for new roundabouts throughout this project this will take several months to complete. The prime contractor stated that the storm drainage pipes will start being installed next month and the overall completion date for this project is November 11, 2028. Town Manager Reeves reported on various funding options and grant programs the town is exploring for disaster recovery and infrastructure repairs. She commented on conversations with different agencies and consultants, explaining the challenges in finding suitable funding sources for the town's specific needs.

### **Adjournment**

*Motion: Commissioner Bridges moved to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor of the motion.*

Mayor O'Cain adjourned the meeting at 10:51am

ATTEST:

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Stephanie Banks  
Town Clerk

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Carey O'Cain  
Mayor

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Date