



Town of Laurel Park  
Town Council Work Session Minutes  
November 13, 2025, at 9:30 AM  
Town Hall- 441 White Pine Drive, Laurel Park, NC 28739

**Present:**

Mayor O'Cain  
Mayor Pro Tem Banta  
Commissioner Bridges  
Commissioner Bonnema  
Commissioner Morse  
Town Manager Reeves  
Town Clerk Banks  
Robert Fain  
Laurel Crowell  
Edward Eaves  
Don McIntyre  
John McGregor (Present by Teams)

**Absent:**

Fire Chief Garren

**Call to Order**

Mayor O'Cain called the meeting was called to order at 9:30 AM.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda made by Commissioner Banta, the vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

**Old Business**

None

**New Business**

Native Plant Stewardship Committee Presentation

Mr. McGregor presented on behalf of the Native Plant Stewardship Committee, formerly known as the Invasive Species Committee. He explained his background, noting that he has lived in Laurel Park for about 3 years and holds a doctorate in physiological plant ecology with graduate degrees in etymology and plant pathology. He has approximately 40 years of experience working in weed management research and related regulatory issues surrounding environmental stewardship, pollinator safety and endangered species act.

Mr. McGregor explained that the committee changed its name earlier this year to better reflect their focus not only on invasive plant management but also on protecting and preserving native natural communities in Laurel Park.

He presented an invasion curve chart showing different phases of invasive management: prevention, eradication, containment, and long-term management. He noted that while some areas like Laurel Creek Park have lighter infestations that could be addressed through volunteer efforts, most of Laurel Park is in the containment to long-term management phase.

Mr. McGregor proposed an organizational realignment with two components:

- The Native Plant Stewardship Committee would continue to focus on education, volunteer coordination, and community engagement, particularly for lighter infestations. They would lead workshops, provide training, and develop educational materials.
- Establishing an Invasive Plant Management Working Group (IPMWG) that would focus on public lands with moderate to higher infestations. This group would include 1-2 residents with expertise, public works staff Johnson and Hensley, and would develop a town-wide management plan, coordinate work across public lands, provide technical guidance, and oversee any contracted work.

Regarding resources, Mr. McGregor mentioned that the committee currently has annual funding of about \$3,500 through the parks and greenways budget. He also secured a \$3,000 grant from the North Carolina Native Plant Society. For the proposed working group, he requested \$20,000 per year based on consultations with certified contractors. Additional staff support was also discussed, including potential summer interns and graduate student projects.

The goal would be to establish a plan in time to begin implementation in spring 2026.

During discussion, Mayor O'Cain asked about approved contractors for invasive removal. Mr. McGregor identified two local contractors: Appalachian Land Stewardship and Eco Foresters, who have necessary certifications and licensing for herbicide use.

Mayor Pro Tem Banta expressed strong support for the effort, noting that while some progress had been made on English Ivy, the hurricane a year ago had compounded invasive species problems.

Motion to acknowledge invasive plant management as a town and local responsibility essential to preserving Laurel Park's natural assets made by Commissioner Bridges, the vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Bonnema raised a question about staff involvement in the proposed working group, specifically regarding Johnson and Hensley. It was clarified that staff involvement would be limited, and staff members already have the necessary certifications for chemical application.

Motion made to establish the Invasive Plant Management Working Group made by Commissioner Bonnema. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Town Manager Reeves noted that the \$20,000 funding request would need to be addressed during budget discussions.

### **HWY64 Project Updates**

Town Manager Reeves provided updates on watering plans for the four roundabouts. She presented two options:

- Using a watering truck, which raises concerns about timing and traffic management.

- Adding water meters through the city of Hendersonville, with an estimated cost of \$16,200 for four tap fees, four SDF fees, four RPZ devices, enclosures, tubing, and ten hydrants. This does not include the cost of infrastructure, which would be additional.

Mayor O’Cain suggested getting a price for installing four standpipes with shut-off valves rather than a full-sprinkler system, noting that during the establishment period for plantings, consistent watering would be important.

Town Manager Reeves also discussed electrical options for the roundabouts, with either single source hook-ups per light or connections per roundabout. Mayor O’Cain suggested getting an estimate from Stepp Electric for installing a duplex outlet in each roundabout or at minimum running conduit with pull springs for future electrical needs.

Regarding landscaping, Town Manager Reeves mentioned the tree count had been reduced based on Duke Energy requirements. Mayor O’Cain recalled previous discussions about welcome signs for Laurel Park that could be incorporated into the landscaping plans, suggesting that a more monumental sign would be appropriate for Highway 64, particularly on the town's three-acre property coming out of Hendersonville.

### **Agenda Review**

Town Manager Reeves presented the updated agenda, noting two new items under New Business: decentralized wastewater treatment systems grant program and a budget amendment for the transfer of ARPA funds.

Mayor O’Cain mentioned an email from Mike Erwin regarding complaints about road work on Rowland Drive that has not been addressed and requested Public Works Director Johnson provide an update at the Tuesday meeting.

Mayor O’Cain also provided information about upcoming events:

- December 3: Tree lighting from 4-6 PM at Laurel Green, with the actual lighting at sunset (approximately 5:17 PM). The event will include a youth choir singing Christmas carols, refreshments, and Santa Claus.
- December 5: Staff Christmas party at Hendersonville Country Club at 6:00 PM.

### **Mayor and Town Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Morse noted there had been no response to their letter to the SBA. Mayor O’Cain suggested if no response is received by January 1, they should send another letter with a "please respond by" date.

Mayor Pro Tem Banta mentioned the Essentials of Municipal Government training scheduled for January 15-16, which would be beneficial for new members to attend in person.

Commissioner Bridges suggested it was time for a council evaluation, either self-evaluation or professional. Town Manager Reeves agreed to add this as a discussion item for the December work session.

A discussion about deer management was initiated, with Mayor Pro Tem Banta noting that some residents want to start a petition for action. Mayor O’Cain referenced previous input from a wildlife expert who indicated the deer population issue was not severe (rating it 3 out of 10). Commissioner Bonnema suggested having Chief Trotter present recommendations at the January meeting for the council to adopt an approach similar to their process with invasive plants. Don McIntyre, who has a degree in wildlife management, noted that hunting

would be the only effective control method, but current town regulations prohibit even bow and arrow use.

Commissioner Bridges congratulated Henderson County for receiving \$14 million from FEMA, though she noted they still owe \$31 million. Commissioner Bridges also raised a constituent complaint about household trash and debris not related to hurricane cleanup. Mayor O'Cain suggested identifying the specific location and sending a photo to Town Manager Reeves to address the issue.

The comprehensive plan survey was briefly discussed, with several council members noting they had not taken it as it was not yet available.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Morse at 10:23 AM. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.