

THE TOWN OF LAUREL PARK

Official Newsletter

www.laurelpark.org

Greetings and Happy Summer

from

Mayor O'Cain

As we transition to summer and begin a new fiscal year, I would like to share a few important updates with you. While the past year has brought significant challenges, we remain committed to transparency, resiliency, and service to our community.

Unchanged Property Tax Rate

We are pleased to announce that our property tax rate will remain unchanged at 39.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value for the upcoming fiscal year. Your tax bill will not increase. For context, the City of Hendersonville's rate is currently 52.0 cents per \$100.

Paving Project Paused

While the Town Council budgeted \$620,000 in last year's budget to continue our paving project, because of Helene, we were forced to have a new focus. While this was a difficult decision, it simply does not make financial sense to pave a road that will be ruined by debris trucks and construction vehicles for numerous months.

Stormwater Fee Increased to Address Infrastructure Needs

To better prepare for and respond to stormwater damage, the monthly stormwater fee will increase from \$5 to \$10 beginning this July 1st. This increase will generate more funds to allow us quicker and more efficient infrastructure maintenance and replacement.

Emergency Fund and the Impact of Helene

Our unassigned fund balance (essentially our savings account), currently stands at \$2,760,752. This fund has been gradually built up over the past decade, but it is still not enough to fully address the devastation caused by Helene. It may be necessary to use a portion of this fund to meet matching requirements for any eventual state and federal aid.

Working Together

While we are grateful no lives were lost in Laurel Park due to the devastation caused by Tropical Storm Helene, we know that many lives were deeply impacted. To all who are still recovering; we see you, we care, and we are truly sorry. The challenges have been heavy, and our frustration with FEMA is substantial. We shall also recognize that Laurel Park fared better than some neighboring towns.

As we recognize the 9-month anniversary of Tropical Storm Helene, we are still waiting for meaningful financial assistance from government agencies. We urge you to continue contacting your elected officials in Raleigh and Washington, asking for this support. Please do so respectfully as we are all taxpayers and deserve to be heard.

A Century Strong

In closing, and on a brighter note, we are excited to share that Laurel Park celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2025! She may be a century old, but she certainly does not show it! We look forward to honoring this special milestone and celebrating you, our residents, whose care, and dedication help keep our town thriving.

With Gratitude,
Carey

Contact Your State and Federal Elected Officials

A text is provided below to copy and paste to an email or a letter.

If you prefer to write a letter, drop it off to Town Hall and we will mail it for you.

SUBJECT HEADER: Our Town needs your help immediately!

I am writing to express my frustration and extreme dissatisfaction with FEMA's public assistance program following Tropical Storm Helene. It has now been more than 9 months since our community began recovery efforts; and, to date, Laurel Park has yet to receive a single penny of the promised assistance necessary for our town to move forward in addressing the critical damage and mitigate increased safety risks.

To sum up the current condition of Laurel Park:

- The topographical damage from Helene continues to challenge the security and stability of homes, public facilities, and especially the town's infrastructure.
- Landslides continue to crumble with each episode of moderate to heavy rain.

Continued on Page 3

- Damaged stormwater infrastructure assets including culverts and drainage ditches are unable to control severe erosion and sedimentation deposits which trigger more damage to the roads and road shoulders.
- Roads have been closed due to deterioration from landslides and worsened erosion.
- Piles of debris from brush and fell trees further cause alarm and an elevated risk of wildfire.

FEMA reimbursement is ineffective for a reasonable timeline of disaster recovery. Updated FEMA guidelines handicap small municipalities with very limited budgets.

- Laurel Park's annual budget is \$4.5 million but has at least \$15 million in Helene recovery costs. Without immediate funding, our small community would bear an extraordinary long-term burden.
- Waiting for reimbursement according to FEMA'S timeline and at a reimbursement rate our town could afford would extend our recovery for many years, a decade or more.

I urge you to consider sharing this with your constituents in an effort to support expedited FEMA funding/reimbursement. Please speak up for the taxpayers of Laurel Park, NC.

Sincerely,

(Include full name, address, phone, & email address)

US SENATE

Senator Ted Budd

354 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3154
senator@budd.senate.gov
(<https://www.budd.senate.gov/contact/>)

Senator Thom Tillis

113 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-6342
senator@tillis.senate.gov
(<https://www.tillis.senate.gov/email-me>)

US HOUSE

Congressman Chuck Edwards

1505 Longworth House Office Building
(202) 225-6401
Local office:
200 North Grove Street, Suite 121
Hendersonville, North Carolina 28792
(828) 435-7310
chuck@chuckedwardsnc.com
(<https://edwards.house.gov/contact>)

NC SENATE

Senator Timothy D. Moffitt

300 N. Salisbury Street, Rm. 520
Raleigh, NC 27603
(919) 733-5745
Tim.Moffitt@ncleg.gov

NC HOUSE

Representative Jennifer Balkcom

16 West Jones Street, Rm. 2215
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096
(919) 733-5956
Jennifer.Balkcom@ncleg.gov

Town Contact Information

Town Hall (828) 693-4840
9:00 am - 5:00 pm Monday to Friday
Police Non Emergency (828) 692-9399
Valley Hill Fire & Rescue (828) 692-2581



Mayor: J. Carey O'Cain

Commissioners:

George W. Banta
Travis Bonnema
Debra H. Bridges

Town Manager: Cara R. Reeves

Finance Officer: Cortney Kidd

Town Clerk: Stephanie Banks

Police Chief: Bobbie Trotter

Public Works: Brandon Johnson

Public Meeting Schedule

[-Please check on the website for up-to-date meeting changes prior to attending-](#)

Town Council Work Session

July 10 at 9:30 am
August 14 at 9:30 am

Town Council Regular Meeting

July 14 at 9:30 am Special Meeting
July 15 at 9:30 am
August 19 at 9:30 am

Planning Board

July 8 at 3:00 pm
August 12 at 3:00 pm

Parks & Greenways Board

July 8 at 9:30 am
July 11 at 10:00 am-Special Meeting
July 24 at 4:00 pm-Site Meeting
Location: TBD
August 12 at 9:30 am
August 28 at 4:00 pm-Site Meeting
Location: TBD

ABC Board

July 22 at 8:30 am
August 26 at 8:30 am

Board of Adjustment

July 10 at 4:00 pm

Bee Committee

July 15 at 4:30 pm
August 19 at 4:30 pm

Bicycle Committee

August 11 at 3:00 pm

Invasive Species Committee

July 2 at 10:00 am

Centennial Committee

August 11 at 11:30 am

CALENDAR

July 4 - Town Hall Closed

In observance of Independence Day

July 5 - Centennial Picnic

2:30 pm to 6:00 pm at Laurel Green Park. *Reservations Required*
Parking at First Congregational Church

July 9 - LP Volunteer Garden

Work Day at 10:00 am

Meet at First Congregational Church

July 24 - LP Volunteer Garden

Work Day at 10:00 am

Meet at First Congregational Church

August 5 at 6:30 pm

Community Education Class
hosted by LP Police

August 5 - LP Volunteer Garden

Work Day at 10:00 am

Meet at First Congregational Church

August 9 & 16 - Historical Tours

Tour Times: 8:30 am, 10:30 am and 12:30 pm. *Reservations Required*
Provided by the Trolley Company and FLP. Will start at the First Congregational Church

August 20 - LP Volunteer Garden

Work Day at 10:00 am

Meet at First Congregational Church



Friends of Laurel Park

The Friends of Laurel Park have teamed up with the Town to sponsor another Centennial event; the July 5th Centennial Celebration Picnic at Laurel Green Park. The picnic will be free to town residents and will include BBQ and entertainment by The 10 Kings of Jazz Band. Trailside Brewery will also be present. Parking is at the First Congregational Church. Registration required at Town Hall for this event. Call 828-693-4840.

In August, the Friends will continue its annual series of History Tours of Laurel Park, with local storyteller Knox Crowell hosting. Three tours are planned each day, August 9th and August 16th. Tour times: 8:30 am, 10:30 am and 12:30 pm. Reservations are also required for these events: the FLP website will open approximately two weeks prior to August 9th.

Again, parking will be at the First Congregational Church lot where a bus will meet you. Even if you attended Mr. Crowell's excellent slide presentation on May 22, we

guarantee you will learn even more from him on these tours.

Please visit www.friendsoflaurelpark.org for event updates, event registration,



volunteer opportunities, to make a donation, and sign up for emails about FLP activities.

If you haven't seen the Parks & Greenways tribute, the next time you're out for a walk, take a stroll along 5th Avenue and check out the bed of begonias spelling out "100" in celebration of Laurel Park's centennial on the berm of Laurel Green Park!

Photo courtesy of Pat LaSalle



Scavenger Hunt

Sponsored by The Friends of Laurel Park

As part of our 2025 centennial celebrations, the centennial committee has developed a historical scavenger hunt. The Scavenger Hunt booklet is available at Town Hall and contains all the directions for you to successfully finish the hunt. Pick one up and begin searching for the answers on the town's 22 historical markers near the roadways throughout our mountain.

A beautiful commemorative centennial coin medallion will be awarded to every family that completes the booklet. If you can manipulate the answers in a math formula provided, you have a chance at winning some nice gift cards from area Laurel Park businesses as well.

Although the scavenger hunt can be attempted throughout the year, prizes will first be awarded at our centennial picnic on July 5th at Laurel Green Park.



Nancy McKinley's granddaughter, Lilly McKinley, worked hard to complete the scavenger hunt!



Laurel Park Police Department



Important Updates on Wildlife Feeding and Deer Population Management

In response to ongoing concerns about the local deer population, the Town of Laurel Park has taken steps to naturally reduce deer numbers and address public safety and environmental balance. As part of these efforts, a new Town Ordinance has been adopted prohibiting the feeding of wildlife with specific exceptions noted below.

Ordinance

FEEDING OF WILD ANIMALS PROHIBITED

Passed 6-17-2025

It shall be unlawful for any person to intentionally feed any wild animal within Town limits. This provision excludes the feeding of wild birds, squirrels, and pollinators.

Violation Penalty (§ 91.99):

Any violation of this ordinance constitutes a Class 3 misdemeanor. Upon conviction, violators may be subject to a fine ranging from \$50 to \$500, or as amended, in accordance with G.S. §§ 14-4 and 160A-175.

We understand that deer and bears may occasionally access bird feeders. However, the ordinance targets intentional feeding, such as placing corn or other food specifically for deer. If you are currently feeding deer, we ask that you gradually reduce the amount of food offered over several weeks. This allows deer time to adjust their browsing behavior and return to more natural food sources.

In addition to changes regarding wildlife feeding, the Town Council has consolidated and updated three previously existing ordinances 130.35 (Projectiles Restricted) and two versions of 130.36 (Discharge of Firearms)--into a single ordinance to ensure clarity and public safety.

Updated Ordinance

FIREARMS AND OTHER WEAPONS

Passed 6-17-2025

(A) No person shall shoot, discharge, or release within the town limits any firearms, spring-propelled devices, or guns, including bows that discharge sharp-pointed

Continued on Page 8

arrows designed to penetrate. This section does not apply to law enforcement officers or authorized governmental representatives acting within the scope of their official duties.

(B) This section also does not apply when acting in defense of life. Furthermore, to promote the public health, safety, and welfare of the Town, it does not preclude officers or persons designated by the Town under a depredation permit issued by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission or through participation in the Commission's Community Deer Management Assistance Program.

At this time, there are no plans to enact a depredation permit. If that process becomes necessary, I will ensure that all residents are informed and involved in the discussion.

Thank you to everyone who has shared input, concerns, and expertise. Your involvement is essential in helping us make thoughtful, balanced decisions for our community.

Bobbie Trotter
Chief of Police

Lightning Safety



Thunder and lightning storms happen all the time. Know what to do when storms strike!

Outdoor Safety

- If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance of lightning. Look for shelter inside a home, large building, or a hard-topped vehicle right away.

- Do not go under trees for shelter. There is no place outside that is safe during a thunderstorm.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder before leaving your shelter.
- Stay away from windows and doors. Stay off porches.
- If a person is struck by lightning, call 9-1-1. Get medical help right away.
- If your home is struck by lightning, call 9-1-1.

Indoor Safety

- Turn off computers. Stay off corded phones, computers, and other things that put you in direct contact with electricity or plumbing. You can use a cell or cordless phone.
- Do not wash your hands, bathe, shower, do laundry, or wash dishes.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact:
Fire and Life Safety Officer
Chris McDowell
(828) 692-2581 ext. 105



Stay in the Laurel Park Loop!

facebook

Find us on Facebook: Town of Laurel Park, North Carolina

Blackboard
connect

Follow this link and sign up to be notified of special events, Town emergencies, garbage service day changes by phone, email or text.
<https://laurelparknc.bbcportal.com>

LATEST
NEWS

Look for the latest Town news and announcements on our website www.laurelpark.org. Select the "News" tab and choose "Latest Town News & Announcements".

MEETING

Meeting agendas and minutes can be found on our website www.laurelpark.org. Select the "Government" tab, and choose "Agendas & Minutes".

Parks & Greenways

The Evolution of Canal Park

Submitted by Pat LaSalle

Most Laurel Park residents are very familiar with the lovely Laurel Green Park and Rhododendron Nature Park, but may be less familiar with Canal Park, a long, narrow greenway starting at Laurel Park Highway and running along the east side of Lake Drive. Purchased by the Town of Laurel Park in 2007 as part of a broader acquisition,



the property that includes Canal Park – the historic canal corridor connecting Rainbow Lake and Rhododendron Lake - was expected to be developed over time. The Laurel Park Volunteers started small on making this happen – establishing 2 smallish beds of pollinator-friendly plants at the northern end of the park and planting several trees for Arbor Day in 2023/2024. However, if you drove or walked down Lake Drive earlier this year, you would have been less than impressed by the kudzu,



brambles, deadfalls and weeds at the opposite end of the park as well as the vines and ivy choking the trees. That's about to change! As you are likely aware, Rhododendron Nature Park has been closed since Hurricane Helene pending assessment and funding by FEMA to effect needed repairs. Not to be daunted by the compulsory work stoppage in hurricane-impacted areas of Laurel Park, the Parks & Greenways Board turned their attention to Canal Park. We started by engaging a contractor to begin the arduous task of removing the overgrown vegetation. Kudzu removal can be challenging! It's not enough to mow or even brush hog as the roots are fast-growing and persistent. Digging out the root crowns is one of the only effective methods to get rid of it once and for all. If you've been near Canal Park at the beginning of June, you might have seen the contractor hard at work excavating the crowns, removing the debris and grading the property. Once that's done, the dirt will be hydroseeded with a native seed mix.



Once everything has been cleared, we will have a better

Continued on Page 11

idea of what the Park actually looks like and we can begin to design a new venue for the pleasure of the residents of and visitors to Laurel Park. It won't happen this year or even next year, but we look forward to making this a reality.

The vision for the Canal Park is to provide a habitat for pollinators like bees, butterflies and hummingbirds which are essential for our planet. Laurel Park, an official Bee City USA city from 2021, has plans underway to foster a community that recognizes the importance of pollinators to our food supply and overall health of habitats.

Much, much more to come!

Native Plant Stewardship Committee

*Protecting Native Plants and Combating Invasives,
Preserving Laurel Park's Natural Heritage*

The Native Plant Stewardship Committee has been established in the Town of Laurel Park to coordinate efforts to preserve native plant communities and address the impacts of invasive plants. The committee was previously known as the Invasive Species Committee. The name change reflects the importance of native plants in maintaining healthy ecosystems and contributing to the natural character of Laurel Park. While the primary role of the committee remains the management of invasive plants, there will now be a focus on the stewardship of native plants.

Mission

Native plants are the foundation of our local plant communities, providing essential habitat and food sources for beneficial insects, birds, and wildlife. However, the spread of invasive plants threatens these ecosystems by outcompeting native vegetation, reducing biodiversity, and altering natural landscapes. The committee will address these challenges through coordinated removal efforts, habitat restoration, and public education.

The committee's work will focus on three core strategies:

1. Invasive Plant Management: Identifying and removing invasive plants.
2. Native Plant Stewardship: Encouraging the use, conservation, and restoration of native plants in landscapes and natural areas.
3. Community Engagement: Providing resources, workshops, and volunteer

opportunities to foster a shared sense of responsibility and connection to Laurel Park's natural environment.

The Native Plant Stewardship Committee will collaborate with residents, local organizations, and regional experts to help preserve Laurel Park's natural heritage for future generations.

Contact: John McGregor | info@floraoflaurelpark.com



MAYBIN'S

A division of Kirby Sanitation

☎ 828-692-9872

maybinsgarbage.com

Maybin's requests residents call their office if garbage or recycling did not get picked up. They should let you know if a driver is able to come back that day or if pick up will be rescheduled.

Available for Purchase While Supplies Last!

Cash, personal check, or debit/credit card (Mastercard or Visa) accepted.

If paying with cash, please have exact change.



Commemorative License Plate \$15.00



Commemorative Coin \$5.00



For Your Next Adventure

Pick Up a Bike Route Map

or

Foot Path Map

Today!

Available in the Boxes
Outside Town Hall

