

THE TOWN OF LAUREL PARK

Official Newsletter

www.laurelpark.org

A Message from the Mayor

At a recent Comprehensive Plan Update meeting, committee members ask why Council and Staff were discussing the need for repairs, renovations, or a new Town Hall. While discussion of Town Hall is not at the level of priorities as hurricane Helene repairs, edge of roadway or return to extensive road repairs, Council must always look further down the road. The Comprehensive Plan for example is a 10 to 20 year look forward.

Many of you are aware of our deficiencies:

- Conference room limited capacity of thirty-eight.
- Inadequate communal room for presentations, speakers and HOAs.
- Inadequate capacity for police evidence storage and firearms.
- Insufficient circulation.
- Lack of public restrooms.
- Lack of offices for Council and Mayor.
- Lack of employee lockers, especially police.
- Lack of privacy for clerks and zoning.
- Evidence of mold and lead.
- Deteriorating interior and exterior.
- Continued maintenance expense.
- Detrimental to efficiency of staff, police, and residents.

A plan needs to be in place to eventually deal with these issues. Laurel Park moved to this current location from a one room office on Main Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenue. This office served the Town when the population was about

four hundred. When George Knoff was Mayor, the Town office moved to its current location about 1984. At that time, the building was a house. My brother, Bill, was a resident and local architect. He volunteered his services to make the house as reasonably close to an office as possible. Eventually the garage was turned into a conference room to be used for Council meetings. Until 2009, this room was concrete floor with empty walls. Paul Hansen, George Banta, and I renovated this room including wainscot, trim, cabinets, electrical, fixtures, carpet, and pictures. We have always worked within our means. This building is much like everyone's first house. At some point, you realize that you need a renovation or new home to accommodate your expanded family and better meet your needs. As we deal with our critical, immediate needs we must figure out: What, Where, When and How we solve this problem.

If you have experience in architecture, planning, real estate, or design please contact us to establish and join a study committee to rigorously evaluate our options.

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.



“LAUREL PARK A RETROSPECTIVE”

Editor: Knox Crowell

Laurel Park's transformation from a seasonal retreat to a vibrant, permanent community has not diminished its charm. Instead, it has enriched the town's character, making it a beloved place for those who appreciate both its history and its natural beauty. Whether one is drawn to its historical roots or its picturesque landscapes, as it celebrates its centennial, Laurel Park remains a cherished gem in the heart of North Carolina.

Buy your copy today!

\$35.00



Commemorative License Plate \$15.00



Commemorative Coin \$5.00

From Disaster to Recovery

A Guide for the Town of Laurel Park

By Town Manager Reeves

The FEMA Public Assistance (PA) Program provides critical reimbursement to local governments like the Town of Laurel Park for eligible disaster-related expenses. This simplified step-by-step timeline outlines the journey from declaration to reimbursement.

September 26, 2024: 8:00 am

State of Emergency Declaration

- Mayor O’Cain declared a State of Emergency for the Town of Laurel Park due to the weather-related impacts from Hurricane Helene. This triggered the Town’s eligibility for funding under FEMA PA.

October 2024

Damage Inventory & Scope of Work

- A damage inventory assessment and related map were drafted for public roads and stormwater-related infrastructure. The Town’s estimate is between \$10 and \$15 million dollars. For reference, our annual operating budget is roughly \$4.4 million dollars. The parks are another story and are being approached separately as they are not related to life, health, and safety. The cost of permanent work in our parks will likely be between \$1 and \$2 million dollars.

November 2024

Applicant Contracts

- The Town of Laurel Park contracted with Land of Sky Regional Council of Governments to assist with the public assistance management. Additionally, WGLA Engineering and WithersRavenel were contracted to manage all engineering and construction projects related to infrastructure repairs and Watermark Landscape Architecture for repairs in our parks.

November 2024

Submit Request for Public Assistance

- The Town of Laurel Park submitted a Request for Public Assistance through FEMA's Grants Portal, to officially announce eligibility for reimbursement.

December 2024

Kickoff Meeting

- The first visit by FEMA and NC Department of Emergency Management (NCEM). This meeting kicked off the Town's recovery efforts. We were just discovering the wildly complicated process, and the required steps if the Town were to seek reimbursement from the federal and state governments.

In-Progress

Project Worksheet (PW) Development

- For each repair, Laurel Park must develop worksheets outlining the scope of work, estimated costs, and regulatory compliance. The first PW must denote replacement of infrastructure as it was (in-kind only), while the second version will provide our desired improvements that will increase resiliency against future events.

In-Progress

Project Review & Validation

- FEMA evaluates each PW for eligibility, environmental or historic impacts, and cost effectiveness. Clarifications will be requested before approval. For example, we must provide proof of pre-disaster condition of all destroyed culverts.

Not Started

Obligation of Funds

- Once approved, FEMA obligates funds to North Carolina, which then distributes them to the Town of Laurel Park for project execution. The Town of Laurel Park has two projects that have been obligated, though no funds have been received to date.

Not Started

Project Implementation

- At this stage, projects must follow very rigorous procurement policies. Once each project is successfully awarded, actual work may begin. Laurel Park and hired contractors complete the work, while maintaining accurate documentation for labor, materials, and contracts in accordance with the approved scope. The Town must incur these construction costs as part of the FEMA PA reimbursement process.

Not Started

Project Closeout

- Upon completion, final documentation is submitted for review. FEMA and North Carolina reconcile costs, finalize reimbursement, and close the project.

Not Started

Audit & Record Retention

- Laurel Park must retain all records for at least 3 years after closeout. FEMA or auditors may review compliance and financial integrity.

Hurricane Helene Updated Damage Assessment

Go to our [website](#) to read more about [infrastructure repairs](#) as of August 2025.



Natalie J. Berry, PE
Zoning Administrator

Welcome to the Team!

A licensed civil engineer, Natalie has over 27 years working in local governments. She can be reached through the following channels:

- Email: Anytime at assistant@laurelpark.org
- In-Person:
 - Monday by appointment
 - Wednesday by appointment
 - Friday 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Laurel Park Advisory Boards Opportunities

The Town of Laurel Park recognizes and celebrates the diversity of our Town and encourages all individuals to apply to serve on board appointed committees. To apply, please visit our [website](#) or contact Town Clerk, Stephanie Banks.

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

Mayor Pro-Tem: George W. Banta

Commissioners:

Travis Bonnema

Debra H. Bridges

Mark Morse

Town Manager: Cara R. Reeves

Finance Officer: Cortney Kidd

Town Clerk: Stephanie Banks

Zoning Administrator: Natalie J. Berry

Police Chief: Bobbie Trotter

Public Works Director: Brandon Johnson

Public Meeting Schedule

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

Town Council Work Session

November 13 at 9:30 am

December 11 at 9:30 am

Town Council Regular Meeting

November 18 at 9:30 am

December 16 at 9:30 am

Planning Board

November 25 at 3:00 pm

December 9 at 3:00 pm

Parks & Greenways Board

November 25 at 9:30 am

December 9 at 9:30 am

P & G Site Meeting: Location TBD

December 23 at 4:00 pm

ABC Board

November 25 at 8:30 am

December 23 at 8:30 am

Board of Adjustment

Special Meeting

November 20 at 4:00 pm

Bee Committee

November 18 at 4:30 pm

December 16 at 4:30 pm

Bicycle Committee

December 8 at 3:00 pm

Native Plant Stewardship Committee

November 5 at 10:00 am

December 3 at 10:00 am

Centennial Committee

November 10 at 11:30 am

December 8 at 11:30 am

EVENT CALENDAR

November 11 - Town Hall Closed

In observance of Veteran's Day

November 24 - Town Hall Closed

Retention Day

November 27 & 28 - Town Hall

Closed

Thanksgiving Holiday

December 3 at 5:00 pm

Christmas Tree Lighting at
Laurel Green Park

December 24-26 - Town Hall Closed

Christmas Holiday

January 1 - Town Hall Closed

New Year's Day

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE FOR GARBAGE COLLECTION

Veteran's Day November 11: Friday November 14

Thanksgiving Day November 27: Friday November 28

Christmas Day December 25: Friday December 26

New Year's Day January 1: Friday January 2

Friends of Laurel Park

By: Mike Erwin



The Friends of Laurel Park conducted a "Name The Bear" contest in October for the two carved bears in upper Laurel Park (near the flagpole) designed and carved by Laurel Park wood artist Louie

LaChusa in July. The winning names were Stormy and Unity. Signs are being designed currently and will be presented to the town council in November for approval before they are placed in front of the bears.

The Furry Friends meet and greet event had to be postponed this November, but we hope to see it resume in 2026. The Friends assisted the Laurel Park Police Department with treats and some spooky creatures at Laurel Green Park's annual Halloween event Saturday, October 25th.

On December 3rd, the Christmas Tree Lighting will take place as the final Centennial year event at Laurel Green Park. To augment this activity, choir members from the First Congregational Church will be arriving a little after 5 pm to sing and lead a Christmas carol sing-along. Refreshments will be provided.

Continued on Page 8

For information about the Friends of Laurel Park, check our website for events www.friendsoflaurelpark.org. We are also looking to add two new board members starting in January 2025. If interested, contact either Ed Mattern (edmattern@att.net) or Mike Erwin (rmerwin246@gmail.com).

Comprehensive Plan Update Public Input Survey

By: Alexis Baker, AICP
Regional Planner

Are you interested in the future of Laurel Park? The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee created a public input survey with the assistance of the Land of Sky Regional Council. Responses from this survey will influence land use, public facilities and infrastructure, recreation, and government services over the next 10 years. This survey will be available online from November 14, 2025 – January 16, 2026. Paper copies will also be available in the Town Hall during office hours. For more information on the comprehensive plan update and a link to the survey (when available), please visit our website.

Contact Alexis Baker at the Land of Sky Regional Council: alexis@landofsky.org.

Public Works

The Public Works Department reported to date they have taken 580,000 pounds of yard debris to the landfill in addition to what the county has already picked up.

Laurel Park Police Department

Based on the information provided by Police Chief Bobbie Trotter, the total number of events for July, August, and September is 35,622.

- | | |
|---|--|
| • House Checks: 13,811 | • Suspicious Activity (person/vehicle): 97 |
| • Business Checks: 12,409 | • Vehicle Stops: |
| • Foot Patrol: 94 | • Warnings: 113 |
| • Community Activities (events & interactions): 667 | • Citations: 101 |
| • Domestic Disturbance: 12 | • Arrests: 17 |
| | • Accidents: 8 |

The other calls or events are made up of administrative duties, investigations, training, and court.



Laurel Park Police Department

By: Bobbie Trotter, Chief of Police



Congratulations Officer Dabrious Williams Recipient of the Hometown Hero Awards

Presented by Hunter Automotive Group

“The objective of this ceremony is to recognize and honor our local communities’ first responders who step forward every day to protect North Carolina’s communities and citizens. The courage, dedication and sacrifice demonstrated by people like you deserve the attention and honor for which the HOMETOWN HEROES PROGRAM was designed.”



This year I tasked the Laurel Park Police Department Officers, Town Staff, Town Council, and some of the residents that participate in community events, to vote for this year’s nominee submission for the 2025 Hometown Heroes presented by Hunter Automotive Group. The vote was a landslide for Officer Dabrious Williams.

“Officer Williams has 8 total years of law enforcement experience, and we have been blessed to have him for two

years. He came to Laurel Park and jumped into service without hesitation. Officer Williams is the epitome of a community police officer. He not only responds to calls for service, but he has been known to follow up with the victims just to check in on them. Outside of his duties, Officer Williams will cover shifts, stay over his shift to assist his fellow officers or anyone in need. He is a team player. He attends all community events with a positive attitude and a willingness to serve. He is professional and always working to solve any concerns or issues with thoughtfulness and kindness. It is very clear to the staff and the residents that Officer Williams clearly cares about people, not just enforcing the law. His commitment to his community shows the best side of law enforcement,” said Chief of Police, Bobbie Trotter.

Cousins Tom and Randy Hunter are the owners and operators of Hunter Auto Group which encompasses Hunter Subaru, Hyundai, Hunter Volvo, Hunter Powersports, and 1st Choice Auto Centers. They have always been active members of the Hendersonville community.

Continued on Page 10

Randy has served as Chairman of the Salvation Army advisory board. He has been involved with the Merchant's Association Board and has been very active within the Boy Scouts organization and served as a board member of the YMCA. Tom and Randy are both extremely proud to be part of the team involved with the Boys and Girls Club of Henderson County. "Like my father always said, you have to give back to your community what it gives you." "We are so blessed to be part of this community and to be able to give back to the place that raised us," said Tom Hunter.¹

1. Hunter Automotive Group Website.

Morris Kaplan Caring & Sharing Award

Presented by the Kiwanis Club of Hendersonville

In May, Officer Williams was also the recipient of the Morris Kaplan Caring & Sharing Award named in honor of late Kiwanis member, Morris Kaplan. The program, founded in 1996 to recognize law enforcement personnel who show compassion while serving the community. Supervisors from each law enforcement agency that serves Henderson County select a recipient from the ranks of sworn officers, support personnel, and volunteers.



Chartered in 1921, the Kiwanis Club of Hendersonville is the premier civic club in Hendersonville, comprised of an eclectic mix of ages, genders, occupations, backgrounds, and interests. We are all passionate about making our community and the world a better place for children so they can thrive. We are devoted to serving the children in Henderson County and across the country and worldwide through unique and innovative service projects and fundraising initiatives.

1. Kiwanis Club of Hendersonville Website

Above and beyond . . .

Laura in the Parks Department spends a great deal of her time helping maintain our parks. Her dedication ensures that our community spaces remain beautiful and accessible to everyone.

In September, Laura was working in Laurel Green Park and spoke to a woman who frequently walks there. After the woman continued her walk, Laura stumbled upon a lost bank card on the ground and quickly realized to whom it belonged.

Continued on Page 11

With assistance from our diligent Town Clerk, Stephanie, they began the task of finding contact information for the card's owner. Despite being unable to locate a telephone number, they persevered and managed to find her address, which was conveniently near the park.

Demonstrating exceptional dedication, Laura took it upon herself to personally deliver the bank card to its rightful owner. Her actions exemplify the spirit of our community's commitment to helping one another.

Thank you, Laura, and Stephanie, for your outstanding service and for going above and beyond to support our community!

Join Black Board Connect

Blackboard Connect is how the Town of Laurel park keeps its residents informed of the fun stuff going on in Town, as well as the bad stuff.

Stay Informed!

Sign up to receive a text, email or landline call from our automated service and you will know about:



- WEATHER EMERGENCIES
- HOLIDAY CLOSURES
- TRASH DAY DELAYS
- LOCAL ROAD CLOSURES



- LOCAL CONCERTS IN THE PARK
- SPECIAL EVENTS
- CANCELTION NOTIFICATIONS



To sign up, go to:

<https://laurelparknc.portal.finalseiteconnect.com/>



Send an email to:

info@laurelpark.org

Stop by Town Hall:

Fill out the Form



Help Us Rebuild Crystal Springs

By: Curt and Monte Kruger



As part of the Laurel Park community, a group of neighbors came together to clear Crystal Springs of the fallen trees and vegetation caused by Hurricane Helene. We, along with the help of the Town of Laurel Park, were able to remove most of the debris; however, there is an enormous stump that has

crushed the historic arch of the spring.

We feel it is time for the community at large to have a win! Let us come together and rebuild our cherished historic landmark. Friends of Laurel Park will match the first \$1,000 raised, and the rest is up to us! We already have donations for \$3,500, but more is needed to remove the stump and rebuild the arch.



Our goal is to raise \$7,000. Any amount you can give will make a difference. Please donate whatever you can through our GoFundMe.

www.gofundme.com/f/rebuild-crystal-springs-help-restore-our-arch

Make checks payable to:

Crystal Spring Restoration

2007 Laurel Park Hwy

Hendersonville, NC 28739

Donations are tax-deductible. Thank you for your support!

NCDOT Mowing Restrictions

While there is no statewide "no mowing" month of November, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) does restrict mowing around elections. NC SB 391 enacted in July 2025 restricts mowing in a highway right-of-way when politicians can post campaign signs there. State law defines that period as 30 days before the start of early voting through 10 days after a primary or election day. Those dates can vary from place to place and year to year depending on local and state election schedules.

Bee City Committee



BEE CITY USA
AN INITIATIVE OF THE XERCES SOCIETY

Photo: Xerces Society /
Kailee Slusser

Did you know?

Bumble bee queens create shallow burrows to wait out winter. **Keep them protected: leave the leaves**



BEE CITY USA
AN INITIATIVE OF THE XERCES SOCIETY

Photo: Katie Lamke

Thank You Volunteers

By: Mayor Pro Tem Banta

Many thanks to our band of volunteers led by Todd Plessel (Parks & Greenways Board) who rebuilt the wood staircase on the Red Trail up at Jump-Off Rock Park. Todd's crew consisted of Gary Anderson, Mike Erwin, and George Banta. The original staircase was constructed by volunteers from the Carolina Mountain Club back in 2010 and was in desperate need of replacement. Todd organized the design and purchase of materials with help from Laurel Park Public Works. All the materials were precut and treated by Todd and then delivered to the top at Jump-Off Rock. Volunteers carried the materials and tools to the site and constructed the staircase over a period of one and a half days.

With the completion of the new staircase, the Red Trail is a much safer and more enjoyable feature at Jump-Off Rock Park. Thanks again Todd and crew! Your volunteer efforts are what makes Laurel Park such a great place to live.



Maintenance Plan Overview for Laurel Green Creek

By: Bryan Hensley, Park Coordinator

The area of Laurel Green Creek within Laurel Park is a vital contributor to our local ecosystem. It supports native plants that naturally clean water and provide important habitats for wildlife. As the site continues to establish, some areas will be allowed to remain more naturalized, while transitional areas—such as the edges of the creek buffer and adjacent park spaces—will require more regular maintenance to maintain a curated appearance.

Overall, maintenance will be occasional and focused on supporting the site's ecological function. Over time, the goal is for the area to become as self-sustaining as possible, requiring maintenance only on an “as needed” basis. Each zone serves a different purpose and will require varying levels of care both now and in the future.

In the near term, our priorities include identifying and removing invasive species, cleaning around existing plantings, and replacing any plants that have failed in the bioretention ponds to ensure they continue to function properly.

We are also grateful that the creek restoration was completed in time for the plantings to take root and for the floodplain activation areas to perform as intended during Hurricane Helene.

Bluebird Nest Box Project 2025

By: Mike Erwin

For the fourth year, volunteers conducted a survey of bird use of 29 nest boxes established in Laurel Park from 2022. This year, seven people conducted the nest checks from March until August. A total of 5 species of birds used the boxes, with bluebirds using 19 of the 29. It was a banner year for the bluebirds! They raised about 80 young which is the record for the four years. In 2024, only 52 were estimated to have fledged. Rhododendron Lake Nature Park holds the most boxes, and because of the closure of the Park in 2025, it has been suggested that the reduced human disturbance may have benefited the birds.

The Parks and Greenway board is seeking a person to head the project next year, as Mike Erwin offered to fill in during 2025 but does not plan to be permanent. Contact Judy Lyons (jjacksonjr@yahoo.com), acting chairperson of the Parks and Greenway board.

Heating and Protecting Your Home Safely This Winter

Valley Hill Fire & Rescue wants you to heat and protect yourself and home safely this winter by following these simple tips:

Keep anything that can burn (combustible items) at least 3ft from ALL heating sources. (i.e., fireplaces, wood stoves, space, and radiator type heaters).

- Never use an oven to heat your home.
- Use a metal or tempered glass screen in front of your fireplace.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected by a professional.

Proper Disposal of Fireplace Ash

Improper disposal of fireplace ash can cause **wildfires and structure fires**. Coals and ashes from a fireplace may seem cool but can ignite a day or days later. We recommend the following tips of proper disposal of ashes:

- Give plenty of time for them to cool in the fireplace or woodburning stove.
- Transfer the ashes to a metal bucket using a metal scoop or fireplace shovel.
- Remove the metal bucket outside and away from combustibles.
- Pour (saturate) the ashes with water and stir.
- Give plenty of time for the ashes to cool and absorb the water before disposing of them outside in a cleaned-out-from-debris (leaves etc.) spot.

Ensure your home is protected; you should test all smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms.

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to schedule a free Fire & Life Safety Home visit to look for issues or discuss further,

contact:

Fire and Life Safety Officer

Chris McDowell at

cmcdowell@vhfd.com

or call

(828) 692-2581 ext. 105



What is the Firewise USA program?

The Firewise USA® program emphasizes community/ neighborhood responsibility in planning the design of a safe community, as well as an effective emergency response and individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping, and maintenance.



1. HOME IGNITION ZONES

To increase your home's chance of surviving a wildfire, choose fire-resistant building materials and limit the amount of flammable vegetation in the three home ignition zones. The zones include the **Immediate Zone**: (0 to 5 feet around the house), the **Intermediate Zone**: (5 to 30 feet), and the **Extended Zone**: (30 to 100 feet).

2. LANDSCAPING AND MAINTENANCE

To reduce ember ignitions and fire-spread, trim branches that overhang the home, porch, and deck and prune branches of large trees up to 6 to 10 feet (depending on their height) from the ground. Remove plants containing resins, oils, and waxes. Use crushed stone or gravel instead of flammable mulches in the **Immediate Zone** (0 to 5 feet around the house). Keep your landscape in good condition.

FIRE RESISTIVE CONSTRUCTION

3. ROOFING AND VENTS

Class A fire-rated roofing products, such as composite shingles, metal, concrete, and clay tiles offer the best protection. Inspect shingles or roof tiles and replace or repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration. Box in eaves, but provide ventilation to prevent condensation and mildew. Roof and attic vents should be screened to prevent ember entry.

4. DECKS AND PORCHES

Never store flammable materials underneath decks or porches. Remove dead vegetation and debris from under decks and porches and between deck board joints.

5. SIDING AND WINDOWS

Embers can collect in small nooks and crannies and ignite combustible materials: radiant heat from flames can crack windows. Use fire-resistant siding such as brick, fiber-cement, plaster, or stucco, and use dual-pane tempered glass windows.

6. EMERGENCY RESPONDER ACCESS

Ensure your home and neighborhood have legible and clearly marked street names and numbers. Driveways should be at least 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet for emergency vehicle access.

- Develop, discuss, and practice an emergency action plan with everyone in your home. Include details of how to handle pets, large animals, and livestock.
- Know two ways out of your neighborhood and have a predesignated meeting place.
- Always evacuate if you feel it's unsafe to stay. Don't wait to receive an emergency notification if you feel threatened from the fire.
- Conduct an annual insurance policy checkup to adjust for local building costs, codes, and new renovations.
- Create or update a home inventory to help settle claims faster.



**TALK TO YOUR LOCAL FORESTRY AGENCY
OR FIRE DEPARTMENT TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT THE SPECIFIC WILDFIRE RISK
WHERE YOU LIVE.**



FIREWISE USA®
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

Halloween in the Park 2025

On October 25th, the Laurel Park Police Department hosted its fourth annual Halloween event, and it proved to be a resounding success, drawing an estimated crowd of 500 enthusiastic participants. This community-focused celebration aimed to bring together families, friends, and neighbors in a safe, festive environment. Halloween in the Park was an enjoyable trick-or-treating experience for children. Attendees left with smiles on their faces, eagerly anticipating next year's festivities.



Chief Trotter would like to thank Town Staff Administration, Police, and Public Works. Valley Hill Fire Department, Friends of Laurel Park, Laurel Park Bicycle Advisory Committee which handed out free helmets, 1776 Bond Company Derek & Terri Mothershead and Chris Williams, face painting by Kayley Johnson, Melissa Tyler and Mia Nitché, Lucas Danielle and Jenny Reyes, as well as everyone that donated candy.