

THE TOWN OF LAUREL PARK

Official Newsletter

www.laurelpark.org

Hurricane Helene Update for December 2025

By: Town Manager Reeves

As of December 19, the Town has signed task orders for the culvert replacement project and the first 3 major road repair projects. These task orders authorize our engineering firms to begin geotechnical surveying of all damages. Without this step, we don't know the true degree of damage we are expecting to repair. Additionally, after appealing FEMA's original denial, the Town has successfully been obligated the money we spent on the emergency culvert replacement at the entrance to Country Ridge (Davis Mountain Road/Azaela Ridge). This isn't a large dollar amount, though every penny helps when it comes to millions of dollars! The Laurel Park team is continuing to explore additional funding sources including borrowing and grant options.

Gratitude, Resilience, and Community in Laurel Park

A Look Back at 2025

By: Cheryl Hensley

As 2025—our 100th Anniversary year—comes to a close, we pause to reflect on a year that challenged us, strengthened us, and reminded us of the true spirit of Laurel Park. In moments of difficulty, neighbors, volunteers, staff, and elected officials came together, supporting one another and ensuring our town continued to move forward.

Much of the year was shaped by recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene. Damage to roads, culverts, parks, and public spaces required sustained attention, collaboration, and advocacy. While permanent repairs take time, the Town remained focused on safety, essential

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services, and clear communication with residents. Our parks and natural areas are still healing—powerful reminders of nature’s force and our shared responsibility to protect and care for these treasured spaces.

We also pause to remember Paul Hansen, a devoted community member and public servant whose leadership, kindness, and commitment left a lasting mark on Laurel Park. His absence is deeply felt, and we honor his legacy by continuing the work he cared about most—serving this town with integrity, compassion, and dedication.

Despite the challenges, the heart of Laurel Park never wavered. Community events, volunteer efforts, and local initiatives brought people together, while Town Council meetings and ongoing projects kept residents engaged and informed. These moments reflect who we are: neighbors helping neighbors and working collectively for the good of our Town.

Comprehensive Plan Update Public Input Survey Ends January 16, 2026

By: Alexis Baker, AICP

Regional Planner

Land of Sky Regional Council

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 until January 16, 2026. Paper copies are available in Town Hall during office hours. If you are unable to make it during office hours, copies are in one of the boxes outside the front entrance.

This survey will take approximately 40 minutes to complete. You do not have to complete the entire survey to submit it. You will, however, need to scroll to the bottom of the page and hit “Done” for your responses to be recorded.

An Update on Our Annual Financial Audit

By: Cheryl Hensley

At the Town of Laurel Park, we remain committed to the highest standards of fiscal responsibility and transparency. To ensure your tax dollars are managed with integrity, the Town undergoes an annual financial audit as mandated by North Carolina General Statute § 159-34.

This comprehensive review is conducted by an independent auditor who examines our financial records to verify accountability and ensure full compliance with all state laws and regulations. These audits serve as a vital "check and balance," providing an unbiased look at the Town's financial health and operational efficiency.

Per state requirements, these reports are due by December 31 of each year. Once the audit is completed and officially received by the Town, we will make the full report available to the public. Residents will be able to review the results directly on the Town of Laurel Park [website](#).

We look forward to sharing these results with you as we continue our mission to keep Laurel Park a vibrant, well-managed community.

Stay Informed: Join Blackboard Connect

By: Cheryl Hensley

Stay informed when it matters most by signing up for Blackboard Connect (*now Finalsite Connect*), our community's official emergency and notification service. This system allows authorized Town staff to quickly share time-sensitive information through text messages, emails, and automated landline calls using the contact details in our database. Alerts may include road closures, weather emergencies, holiday or facility closures, garbage collection delays, special events, and cancellation notices; anything that could impact the safety, property, or well-being of our residents.

Signing up is easy, and you get to choose how you'd like to be notified; by text, email, landline call, or all three! Don't miss critical information that affects you and your family—register today via our [website](#) or stop by Town Hall to complete the sign up form to stay connected and informed.

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

January 15 at 9:30 am

February 12 at 9:30 am

Town Council Regular Meeting

January 20 at 9:30 am

February 17 at 9:30 am

Planning Board Special Meeting

January 6 at 3:00 pm

Planning Board

February 10 at 3:00 pm

Parks & Greenways Board

January 13 at 9:30 am

February 10 at 9:30 am

P & G Site Meeting: Location TBD

January 27 at 4:00 pm

February 24 at 4:00 pm

ABC Board

January 27 at 8:30 am

February 24 at 8:30 am

Board of Adjustment

Special Meeting

January 22 at 4:00 pm

Bee Committee

January 20 at 4:30 pm

February 17 at 4:30 pm

Bicycle Committee

February 9 at 3:00 pm

Native Plant Stewardship

Committee

January 7 at 10:00 am



Friends of Laurel Park

By: Mike Erwin

The Friends of Laurel Park (FLP) announce that our treasurer, Jim Wilson, will be leaving our board effective January 1. Jim has done an exceptional job as our treasurer for five years but

also has played a significant role as the board's representative on the Centennial Committee for the town. Happily, he has agreed to remain as the FLP board's liaison to the new Ecusta Trail committee.

We are fortunate that two new members will be joining our ranks in January, George Evans and Tom Felice. This will bring the board roster to seven members. The winter plans for FLP involve indoor concerts at the cozy Echo Mountain Inn, starting January 18 (Sunshine Drenchy Duo), then February 22 (Deb Bridges and ii-V-I), and March 22 (the Hope Griffin Duo). The genres range from folk to jazz, blues, soul, and easy rock. Doors open at 5:30, with music 6 – 7:30. For food, "828 Take & Bake" will provide entrees for purchase.

For additional information about the Friends, check out our website at: www.friendsoflaurelpark.org or contact our President Ed Mattern (edmattern@att.net).

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

EVENT CALENDAR

January 1 - Town Hall Closed

In observance of New Year's Day

January 19 - Town Hall Closed

In observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 16 - Town Hall Closed

In observance of Presidents' Day

January 18 - Friends of Laurel Park

Winter Concert

Hosted by Echo Mountain Inn

Doors open at 5:30 pm with music from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm.

Food and drinks available for purchase.

February 22 - Friends of Laurel Park

Winter Concert

Hosted by Echo Mountain Inn

Doors open at 5:30 pm with music from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm.

Food and drinks available for purchase.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE FOR GARBAGE COLLECTION

Maybin's will delay collections by one day for any collection that falls on or after the holiday that week. The standard collection schedule will resume the following week.

New Year's Day January 1 ➡ Friday January 2

Martin Luther King Jr. Day January 19 ➡ Friday January 23

Crystal Spring

By: Cheryl Hensley

We are thrilled to announce that we have successfully raised the funds necessary to rebuild the historic stone arch that covers Crystal Spring. This cherished landmark in Laurel Park will soon be restored to its former glory, thanks to the generous contributions of time and money from our wonderful



community. We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who participated in this fundraising effort. Your support and dedication have made it possible for us to preserve this treasured piece of our heritage for future generations to enjoy.

Restoration work is scheduled to begin when temperatures are warm enough for masonry work, ensuring the best conditions for a successful project. We anticipate the restoration to commence this coming spring.

Once the stone arch is restored, we look forward to celebrating this achievement with all of you! Thank you once again for your invaluable support and enthusiasm. We can't wait to see Crystal Spring shine once more!

Hwy 64 (Brevard Road) Construction Update

By George Banta, Town Commissioner

Construction is now well underway for the improvements to Hwy 64 (Brevard Road) through Laurel Park. The project starts on the east, at the intersection of Hwy 64 and Blythe St. and continues westerly for a little more than a mile to the intersection of White Pine Drive.

Since Laurel Park's initial request over a decade ago, the Brevard Road project has become an integral part of the Town's planning process. The Town has invested considerable time in studying the corridor and how to best balance the business, medical, and residential interests along the corridor as well as the commuting public.

The Brevard Road improvement project features a 2-lane road with roundabouts at White Pine Drive, Daniel Drive, Pisgah Drive, and Glasgow Lane. These improvements will enhance accessibility to our business district by adding sidewalks, bicycle lanes, access to the Ecusta Trail and green space.

Roundabouts serve as traffic-calming devices and improve traffic flow. Based on NCDOT data, roundabouts are safer and more cost effective than lighted intersections. The commercial business district is our "downtown" and these improvements will increase the viability of existing and new businesses by making this an attractive place to locate for years to come.

In September 2024, NCDOT awarded the project to Tennoca Construction, based in Candler, NC, for a total value of \$28,233,125.08. Currently, all right of way acquisitions have been finalized, structures encroaching on the area have been removed, and utility relocation is progressing rapidly. As construction intensifies, temporary lanes will be installed to maintain a continual flow of traffic within the corridor.

As NCDOT advances, the Town and its consultants are planning the project's landscape, utilities, and lighting. NCDOT will cover these amenities up to 1.5% of the total project cost. The NCDOT has recently removed the requirement for a 20% cost share on sidewalk construction projects. NCDOT will now fund total sidewalk construction, saving the Town significant money.

Laurel Park staff works with NCDOT to reduce any road construction disruptions. Residents will receive ongoing updates from the Town throughout construction and be informed in advance about any expected detours or delays. You can always check the Laurel Park website for additional information and updates regarding the Hwy 64 (Brevard Road) project.



Laurel Park Police Department

By: Police Chief Trotter



Laurel Park Wildlife and Deer Population Management

We have received numerous questions and concerns regarding local wildlife, particularly the deer population within our community. I would like to take this opportunity to address these concerns and share the steps we are taking to manage the situation in a responsible, ethical, and environmentally conscious manner.

Can I feed deer or other wildlife?

No, you may not.

We have taken steps to begin naturally reducing the deer population. Laurel Park has adopted a Town Ordinance that prohibits feeding wildlife, except for wild birds, squirrels, and pollinators.

We understand that bears and deer may occasionally eat from bird feeders; however, the ordinance specifically addresses intentional feeding, such as placing corn or other food out for deer.

Please understand that feeding deer is not healthy for them. It can lead to illness and cause deer to become dependent on artificial food sources. If you are currently feeding deer, we ask that you gradually reduce the amount of food over a period of a few weeks. This gradual decrease allows deer time to adjust their browsing habits and return to healthier, natural food sources.

Am I allowed to hunt in Laurel Park?

No, hunting is not allowed.

We recognized that most residents have a strong opinion in culling the herd. To do this in a safe and legal manner, Town Council passed an Ordinance, stating the following:

(A) No person shall shoot, discharge or release within the town limits any firearms, spring propelled devices, or guns, including a bow, which discharges sharp pointed arrows designed to penetrate. This section shall not apply to any law enforcement officer or representative of any governmental unit charged with the duties of protecting life or property or enforcing laws and regulations while engaged in the performance of official duties.

(B) It is further provided that this section shall not apply in defense of life;

however, for promoting public health, safety, and welfare of the Town, this section shall not preclude the officers or persons designated by the Town for this purpose pursuant to any depredation permit issued by the State Wildlife Resources Commission or pursuant to the Town's participation in the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission's Community Deer Management Assistance Program.

In short, it is not allowed to discharge any projectiles in the Town of Laurel Park. This does not apply to law enforcement within their duties, in defense of life, or if the Town Council designates officers/person to do so for the purpose pursuant to any depredation permit/program.

What is being done about the deer?

Our plans to manage the deer population involve several layers, some of which we were not aware of earlier this year. First, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission informed us that the Town would not be granted a Depredation Order. However, there is still a legal option available for managing the deer population. The Town Council could make a motion allowing only law enforcement officers who possess a valid hunting license to participate in deer culling during the State's designated hunting season.

Because these officers are licensed hunters, they are issued deer tags each year and would be expected to use their personal tags for this purpose.

In a nutshell, this year it did not work out. We will be pursuing deer management plans.

How can I assist with managing the deer population?

If you are interested in participating in this program, please contact Assistant Police Chief Michael Capps by email at mcapps@laurelpark.org.

Our goal is to compile a list of property owners who are willing to allow deer hunting on their property. Once the list is complete, and with the approval of Town Council, we will schedule specific dates and times with participating property owners during the hunting season. The season typically takes place in the fall. Conducting the program in a safe and orderly manner will help ensure its overall success.

What happens to the deer that have been killed?

We have found a meat processing company that has agreed to process the deer and donate the meat to people in need.

Reach out to Assistant Police Chief Michael Capps for additional questions or concerns.

Police Activity

During the months of October, November, and through December 17, the Police Department recorded a total of 22,743 events. These included:

- Area Security, Business, and Residential Checks: 11,994
- Accidents: 7
- Vehicle Stops: 190
- Citations Issued: 58
- Arrests: 13
- Animal Calls: 16

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

Public Works Update

By: Cheryl Hensley

Public Works Director Brandon Johnson outlined steady progress on maintenance, safety, and infrastructure improvements throughout town.

Routine brush collection has been completed, and while leaf collection experienced a temporary delay due to FEMA debris cleanup efforts, that work has now been finalized and leaf collection is currently underway. These coordinated efforts ensured storm-related debris was safely removed while allowing regular seasonal services to resume.

Several important maintenance and safety projects were also completed. A hazardous tree was removed from the closed section of Hebron Road, helping reduce risk in the area. New tarps were installed on Rowland Drive, ten potholes were patched across town, and new lighting was installed at the pumphouse to improve visibility and operational safety.

Preparations are underway for additional improvements, including the upcoming striping of primary roads, which will enhance roadway visibility and safety for drivers. Inside Town Hall, office space was freshly painted, contributing to a more welcoming work environment.

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Director Johnson also toured Davis Mountain Road alongside Department of Transportation officials and the Town engineer to review conditions and discuss future planning needs. Meanwhile, Public Works staff continued to invest in professional development by completing continuing education classes, with several team members scheduled to attend a required Stormwater Control Measure training course soon.

These efforts reflect the department's ongoing commitment to maintaining essential services, improving infrastructure, and ensuring staff are well-trained to meet the community's needs.

Native Plant Stewardship Committee

Get Involved in Protecting Laurel Park's Native Landscapes

By: John McGregor

The Native Plant Stewardship Committee (NPSC) of Laurel Park continues to play a significant role in addressing invasive plants in our community. Over the past two months, we have been developing two complementary initiatives aimed at reducing invasive plant impacts.

The first initiative focuses on **community outreach and education**. We will be developing practical, easy-to-use information to help residents identify and manage invasive plants on their own property. This includes written resources, online materials, and the exploration of future opportunities such as workshops, volunteer workdays, and hands-on demonstrations. Our goal is to empower residents with knowledge and tools that support our native plant communities.

The second initiative is the formation of an **Invasive Plant Working Group** focused on town-owned properties. This group will work to identify and map invasive plant populations, prioritize sites, and develop site-specific management plans. These plans will guide coordinated, science-based actions that are effective, sustainable, and appropriate for each location.

Both initiatives will move forward together—education and engagement at the community level, paired with focused management on public lands.

Want to help? Contact us at info@floraoflaurelpark.com, or contact Town Hall and ask that your message be directed to a member of the Native Plant Stewardship Committee. You may also call John McGregor at 919-793-3397.



Bee City Committee

By: Monte Kruger

"You're the bee's knees when you leave the leaves!"

Did you know that bumble bee queens create shallow burrows to wait out the winter? Protect them by leaving the

leaves! Did you also know that Laurel Park is a Bee City? What does it mean to be a Bee City, and why is it important? Being a Bee City means that a community is committed to creating a healthy environment for pollinators.



Research has shown significant declines in native pollinator population sizes and ranges globally. In fact, up to 40% of pollinator species on earth may be at risk of extinction in the coming years because of habitat loss, pesticide use, and climate change.

Thinking globally and acting locally, being a Bee City provides a framework for our community to come together to conserve native pollinators by providing them with healthy habitats that are rich in a variety of native plants, nest sites, and protection from pesticides. As the name suggests, the focus of a 'Bee City' is bees, and primarily our native species. The steps that we can take to conserve our native bees, including creating safe habitats and hosting community events, will also help other pollinators including butterflies and moths as well as the non-native honeybee.

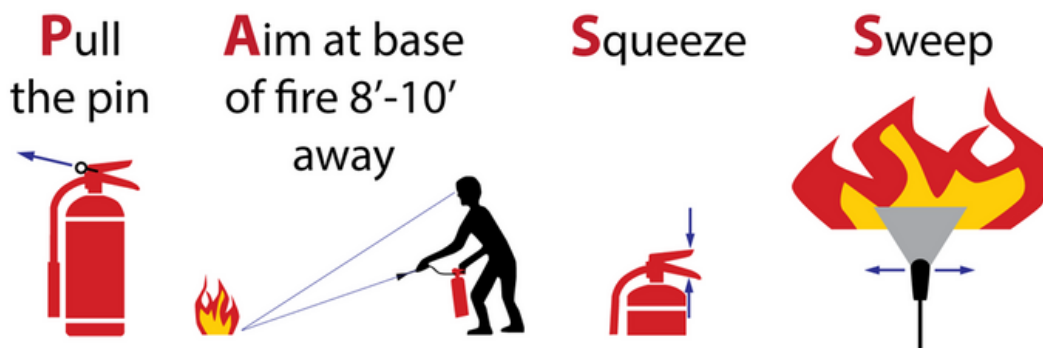
- Check out the [Xerces Society](#) for more helpful information on protecting pollinators. Such as going easy on the mulch; opt for a loose mulch like a nice layer of leaves. Avoid heavy layers of wood chips, rocks or sheets of plastic or landscape fabric that may trap ground nesting insects like Bumble Bees! Create safe havens. Set aside an undisturbed patch of ground allowing leaf litter, standing dead twigs/stems or other ground cover. Unmanicured locations will provide nooks and crannies that pollinators and other animals need for survival.
- Look for the "Bee Committee" as we develop pollinator gardens in Canal Park and along the Ecusta Trail. Join us! Share your ideas and experiences. You'll BEE glad you did and so will the BEEs!

Using A Fire Extinguisher

By: Fire Chief Tim Garren

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives. Before attempting to fight a small fire be sure everyone is out of the building. It is important to CALL 911. If the fire starts to spread or threatens your escape path, get out immediately!

- Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher and become familiar with its parts and operation before a fire breaks out.
- Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area and is not growing, such as a wastebasket.
- *To operate a fire extinguisher - remember the word **PASS**:*



1. **Pull the pin.** Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you and release the locking mechanism.
2. **Aim low.** Point the extinguisher nozzle at the base of the fire.
3. **Squeeze** the handle.
4. **Sweep** the nozzle from side-to-side.

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

To learn more about fire extinguishers
contact:

Fire and Life Safety Officer
Chris McDowell at
cmcdowell@vhfd.com
or call
(828) 692-2581 ext. 105

VALLEY HILL
FIRE
RESCUE