



**Town Council
Work Session Minutes
November 14, 2024 – 9:30 a.m.**

Mayor O’Cain called the Work Session Council Meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. on November 14, 2024, in person at Town Hall, 441 White Pine Drive, Laurel Park, NC 28739.

The following attended in person at Town Hall:

- Mayor Carey O’Cain
- Mayor Pro Tempore A. Paul Hansen
- Commissioner Deb Bridges
- Commissioner George W. Banta
- Commissioner Kristin Dunn
- Town Manager Cara Reeves
- Town Clerk Tamara Amin
- Police Chief Bobbie Trotter
- Public Works Director Brandon Johnson
- Crew Leader Matthew Pearce
- Chad Meadows- CodeWright
- Justin McVey- NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dennis Simmons- AT&T Representative

The following were absent:

- Parks Operation Coordinator Bryan Hensley
- Fire Chief Tim Garren

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Pro Tem Hansen moved to approve the agenda. Mayor O’Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

OLD BUSINESS

AT&T DISCUSSION

Town Manager Cara Reeves said at a previous meeting, Town Council requested an update on the AT&T fiber coverage project. Mr. Simmons said in order for the Town to get fiber to the area, he would need all the addresses. Currently, the Town is only 10% covered.

Mr. Simmons departed the meeting at 9:32 a.m.

NEW BUSINESS

HIGHWAY 64 VISIONING PRESENTATION

Mr. Chad Meadows from CodeWright Planners said in tandem with the incoming four roundabouts on Highway 64, he has prepared an updated vision for the Town's section of the corridor. The presentation is intended to articulate Laurel Park's desired character for the area.

Background:

The project's purpose was to prepare an updated vision for the central portion of the Highway 64 corridor in Laurel Park (the area around Ingles and the Coates plant).

The project's goal was to articulate Laurel Park's desired character for the Highway 64 corridor & Town Center area: a walkable, mixed-use, mountain village.

Vision:

The planned upgrades to the Highway include four new roundabouts, new sidewalks, new bike lanes, new streetlights, landscaping, and other improvements. The south of the corridor depicts the new Ecusta Trail. The improvement project includes gateway features to help travelers recognize their arrival in Laurel Park. The Town is pursuing additional changes to the areas along the corridor to enhance the pedestrian experience, support connections to the Ecusta Trail, and establish a "living room" or village core for Laurel Park.



Mr. Meadow's shared some artist depictions of what the corridor could look like and different examples from other places.

Next Steps:

- Continue to research example efforts
- Review vision elements with the community
- Partner with landowners and other interests to foster redevelopment

Mr. Meadows departed the meeting at 9:55 a.m.

WILDLIFE PRESENTATION

Mr. Justin McVey, the NC Wildlife Commission Biologist, presented the basic biology of white-tailed deer, the life history, diet, and their population status in Henderson County and region.

There are four basic components of deer habitat:

- Food
- Water
- Cover
- Space

Mr. McVey described the different things deer eat. Peak breeding is around December 15. Fawns are usually born in early July. Mr. McVey spoke about carry capacity, which is how many animals can an environment support as well as cultural carrying capacity, which is how many deer individuals want to see.

Damage Prevention:

- No supplemental feeding
- Fencing
- Deer resistant plants
- Repellants
- Frightening
- Deer removal (hunting or shooting)

Areas need a multiprong approach.

Supplemental Feeding:

- Habituation
- Spreads Disease
- Deer Corn = Junk Food
- “Supplemental feeding — however well intentioned — either compromises the animal’s wildness or wellness, or it interferes with the essential natural processes of selection. For the long-term benefit of big game wildlife populations, supplemental feeding is an accident waiting to happen. When and where such feeding is done, it is undertaken only — if not expressly — for the interest of people, because the fed animals almost invariably will not benefit and very likely will be harmed by the practice.”

--The Wildlife Management Institute

Some examples to control deer population is the Minnesota DNR Fence or sprinklers.

Contraception:

- Reduction of deer herd's density due to reduced fertility offset by increased survival (not closed population)
- Contraception is temporary
- Surgical sterilization- extend breeding season and prolong rut
- >85-90 % of female deer need to be rendered permanently infertile to be effective (Boulanger et al. 2012)

This usually doesn't work and is very expensive. It takes at least five years to see any changes.

Mr. McVey described the options for minimizing the impact of deer for residents and costs associated. He has met with a number of other communities in Western North Carolina with deer issues and Laurel Park is not the only one.

Justin McVey departed the meeting at 10:12 a.m.

RECESS

Council recessed at 10:12 a.m. to give residents time to leave after the deer presentation.

Mayor O'Cain resumed the meeting at 10:17 a.m.

LIFT STATION BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT

Mr. Allen Saum said the proposed mural painting project for lift stations represents a unique opportunity to blend functionality with artistry, turning everyday infrastructure into dynamic community assets. By involving local artists and residents, we can create murals that not only beautify our public spaces but also engage and inspire the community. He also said that these murals may even slow down traffic.

Lift stations are essential infrastructure components that support the effective operation of water, sewer and stormwater systems.

Often located in highly visible areas, these structures can sometimes detract from the aesthetics of their surroundings.

Integrating mural painting will enhance the visual appeal of lift stations, transforming them from utilitarian elements into engaging works of art.

PURPOSE

This proposal outlines a comprehensive plan for a mural painting project that seeks to:

Beautify: Improve the aesthetic quality of lift stations by transforming them into visually engaging and attractive features.

Engage: Foster community involvement by including local artists and residents in the design and execution processes.

Promote: Showcase local artistic talent, offering artists a platform to display their work and gain public recognition.

Raise Awareness: Educate the community about the importance of infrastructure maintenance and the role of public art in enhancing urban environments.

OBJECTIVES

Enhance Aesthetics: Revitalize the visual impact of lift stations, converting them from industrial structures into eye-catching public art pieces.

Engage the Community: Involve local artists and community members in both the design and painting phases to ensure the project reflects local culture and values.

Promote Local Art: Provide local artists with a prominent platform to exhibit their creativity and foster a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Raise Awareness: Increase public understanding of infrastructure

SCOPE of the PROJECT

LIFT STATION LOCATIONS

- Laurel Park Hwy @ Railroad Drive – needs improvement & maintenance
- Laurel Park Hwy @ Roberts Drive – would benefit from improvement
- Laurel Park Highway (LPH) @ Hebron Road / 2201 – no improvements needed
- Echo Drive @ Royal Drive - no improvements needed
- Alta Circle @ Toms Drive – no improvements needed

SITE ASSESSMENT

- Identify the visibility, the potential impact on the surrounding area, and the suitability for mural painting.
- Factors such as surface condition, size, and location will be evaluated.
- Perform a detailed site assessment to determine surface conditions, potential structural issues, and logistical considerations that may affect the painting process.

COMMUNITY INPUT

- Conduct community meetings or surveys to gather input on preferred themes, styles, and subject matter.

- This step ensures that the final designs resonate with residents and reflect community values.

PROPOSED THEMES

- Log Cabins – Cottage in the Woods - Nature Scene

DESIGN APPROVAL

- Submit the proposed designs to relevant authorities and stakeholders for review and approval to ensure compliance with aesthetic and regulatory standards.

SITED LOCATION ISSUES

Run-down public facilities can present a range of issues that impact our community.

- **Decreased Property Values:** Surrounding areas often see a drop in property values when public facilities are neglected, which can affect local economies and discourage investment in the community.
- **Increased Costs:** Neglecting maintenance can lead to more expensive repairs or replacements down the line. Addressing issues early can be more cost-effective than dealing with severe damage later.
- **Environmental Issues:** Neglected facilities can exacerbate environmental problems. Uncontrolled plant growth as displayed in the guttering on the Laurel Park Hwy @ Railroad Dr. building blocks the drainage system, and contribute to the accumulation of debris, which compromises the integrity of the structure
- **Social Impacts:** Run down / poorly maintained facilities affect community pride by reducing aesthetic appeal.

BENEFITS

Visual Appeal

Murals will enhance the aesthetic charm of lift stations, transforming them from functional structures into visually appealing elements that enrich the urban landscape.

Community Pride

By involving local artists and residents, the project will foster a sense of pride and ownership, strengthening community bonds.

Cultural Enrichment

Public art installations contribute to the cultural vibrancy of the area, making the lift stations landmarks of artistic expression and local heritage.

Educational Opportunities

The project will serve as a platform to discuss the intersection of art and infrastructure, raising awareness about both the importance of maintaining public utilities and the role of art in public spaces.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Surface Preparation:

Prepare the lift station surfaces by cleaning, repairing any damage, and applying a suitable primer to ensure proper adhesion of the mural paint.

Execution:

Coordinate with the selected artist to schedule the painting process. Ensure that all necessary permits are in place and that the painting work is monitored for quality and adherence to the approved design.

Maintenance Plan:

Develop a maintenance strategy to preserve the murals, including periodic inspections and touch-ups as needed to address any wear or damage over time.

TIMELINE

Planning and Design: Develop project plan, finalize artist selection, and gather community input.	2 months
Artist Selection and Community Input: Issue call for artists, conduct community meetings, and finalize designs.	2 months
Surface Preparation: Clean and prepare surfaces for painting.	2 weeks
Painting: Execute the mural painting with artist coordination.	2 months
Final Review and Maintenance Plan: Review completed murals, finalize maintenance plan, and address any immediate concerns.	2 weeks

Mr. Saum said this would be a good time to start this project for the Town's Anniversary.

BUDGET

Artist Fees: Compensation for design and execution by local artists.	\$5,000 - \$10,000
Materials and Supplies: Costs for paint, brushes, primers, and other necessary materials.	\$2,000 - \$4,000
Surface Preparation: Expenses for cleaning, repairs, and primer application.	\$1,000 - \$2,000
Maintenance Fund: Allocation for ongoing maintenance and touch-ups.	\$1,000 annually
Miscellaneous Costs: Contingency for unforeseen expenses.	\$2,000
Total Estimated Budget:	\$11,000 - \$19,000

Mr. Saum said this budget is for both the Railroad Drive and Roberts Drive locations. He said some perspective artists could be Knox Crowell, Andrea Martin, and Matt Willey. Mr. Saum said maybe the Town can use the budget or pursue grants for this project.

Mayor O'Cain said this was a wonderful thought. Town Council has been trying to maintain these buildings and is on the same page.

Commissioner Bridges asked to add Becky Bonnema as a potential artist to the list.

AGENDA REVIEW FOR THE COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 19, 2024

Ms. Reeves said the Town Council will hold their regularly scheduled Town Council meeting on the third Tuesday of the month, November 19, 2024, at 9:30am. The Town Council reviewed the draft agenda.

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Public Comment**
- 4. Approval of the Agenda**
- 5. Consent Agenda**
 - A. October Monthly Report
 - B. Minutes for the October 15, 2024 Regular Meeting/Public Hearing
 - C. Minutes for the October 23, 2024 Special Meeting
 - D. Minutes for the November 4, 2024 Special Meeting
 - E. Proclamation of Appreciation
 - F. Resolution waving Zoning & Floodplain development permit fees for any permitting related to repairs to, or the rebuilding of, structures and/or properties damaged by Hurricane Helene
- 6. Old Business**
 - A. Public Hearing- UDO Amendments
 - B. WXZ Update
 - C. Board Appointments
- 7. New Business**
 - A. Ratification of contracts executed by the Town Manager during the State of Emergency
- 8. Town Manager's Report**
- 9. Department Head Reports**
 - A. Public Works
 - B. Fire Department
 - C. Police
 - D. Administration
- 10. Mayor and Commissioner Comments**
- 11. Closed Session- NCGS 143-318.11(a)3-** consider and give instructions concerning a potential or actual claim, administrative procedure, or judicial action.
- 12. Adjournment**

Council reviewed the draft agenda and asked to add:

- Budget items to send out postcards to all residents for the Holidays
- FEMA Update
- WXZ representative (Dave Swindell's Supervisor)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Dunn moved to adjourn at 10:33 a.m. Mayor O'Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

ATTEST:

J. Carey O'Cain, Mayor

Tamara Amin, CMC, NCCMC
Town Clerk

Date