

LAUREL PARK, NC STATE OF THE TOWN



MAYORAL ADDRESS

MAYOR CAREY O'CAIN

Greetings! I hope you are all enjoying summer in the Town of Laurel Park. It's been a busy year so far for your Town. I am delighted to tell you that your Town Council has wonderful news. Our beautiful Town is in a very solid position and there will not be a tax increase this year. As we have mentioned before, we strive to only adjust taxes on re-evaluation years which occurs every five years. Our next evaluation year is 2023.

We welcomed our new Town Manager, Mr. Alex Carmichael in February. Alex comes to us from the Town of Montreat where he served as the Town Administrator. Alex is a strong individual and was Council's unanimous choice. Also new to our Town Hall family is Jordan Jones, Alex's assistant and zoning administrator. Carol Federspiel covers reception and customer service. Please welcome our new staff members.

Great progress was made this last year with the Ecusta Trail acquisition and funding. The Ecusta Trail brings significant recreation and economic opportunities to our Town. Work is expected to begin this coming spring. The approved improvements to Highway 64 are proceeding with property acquisition currently underway. These projects will culminate with Laurel Parks Centennial Celebration in 2025. Laurel Park will have its 100th anniversary of incorporation. There will be more news about this celebration and ways that you can get involved.

ROADS, ROADS, ROADS

The biggest announcement this year relates to our biggest problem in Town; the deteriorating quality of our roads. There are 35 miles of roads in Laurel Park. We own 32 miles and the State owns 3. Our roads have constant wear and tear due to weather, steep slopes and heavy traffic. Rain water and erosion is continuously making matters worse.

Continued on next page

Normally we commit our State roadway funds (Powell Funds of approximately \$100,000) and \$.03 of our taxes (approximately \$135,000) to repair roads each year. This \$235,000 annually has not been enough to stay ahead. This year we are taking a bold step of allocating \$1,100,000 to roads and an additional \$742,565 towards stormwater management. The stormwater expense will be covered by our ARP grant, and funds for the road improvements will be covered by drawing from our General Fund. This General Fund is our mandated reserve fund which we feel can be reduced, yet still be at an acceptable level to meet our Town's needs. Next year we are considering increasing the roadway tax allocation to \$.06 instead of the current \$.03. Our Town engineer seems to think that this commitment should enable us to get control of our roads within a 10-year period.

Another exciting announcement relates to a State Grant for the stream restoration at Laurel Green Park. We must thank our State Representative Tim Moffitt and State Senator Chuck Edwards for helping secure these funds. Design is underway and work should commence this spring. We are also committed to making design and landscaping improvements to the round-a-bouts on Highway 64. We started saving \$30,000 each year and have accumulated \$120,000 in this account.

We are always looking for Grant opportunities through State, Federal or private institutions. Currently we are working with the City of Hendersonville to acquire grant funds to help residents with sewer and septic issues.

Our volunteers and committees are incredible. You have seen improvements to our common landscaping and hiking trails. Through volunteers and Eagle Scout projects we are constantly improving and our maintenance department is focusing on improvements to our parks.

Our Staff and Council wish to thank all of our residents for your support. Our Town is special and we love the enthusiasm that volunteers and residents display every day. Thank you for maintaining your warm and friendly attitudes.

Respectfully,

Carey O'Cain

Carey O'Cain, Mayor

STATE OF THE TOWN PICNIC

Join the Council and your neighbors for an evening in Laurel Green Park on August 9th at 6:00 PM. Dinner available for \$13 per person.

For more details, please go to www.laurelpark.org or stop by Town Hall before July 29th.

CUSTOM ENGRAVED PARK PAVERS

Engraved Park Pavers are available for purchase through Town Hall and come in a variety of sizes and prices. They are a special and creative way to honor a loved one, whether they be human or canine, living or deceased. Mark a special event such as a wedding or birth - they are a great idea for a unique gift! Maybe the park just holds special memories for you and your favorite person and you'd like to leave your mark. You can go online at www.laurelpark.org to see pricing and options, or stop into Town Hall and we can help you decide.

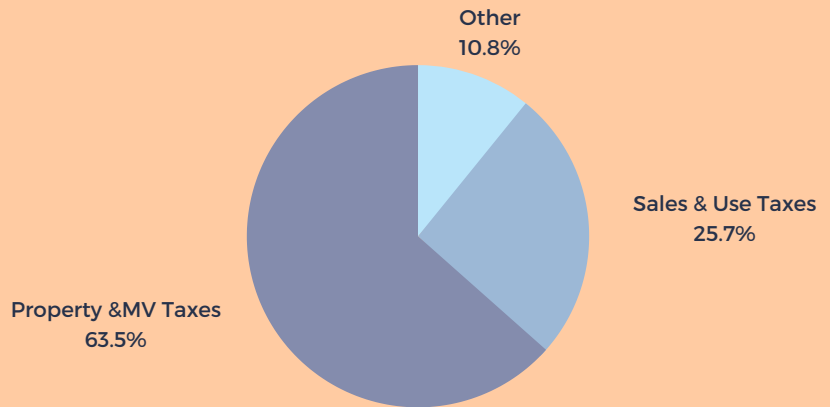
Your purchase goes toward keeping our parks beautiful.

Budget Summary

TOWN OF LAUREL PARK, NC

REVENUE

Most of the Town's revenue is collected from property taxes and taxes on motor vehicles, and sales taxes.



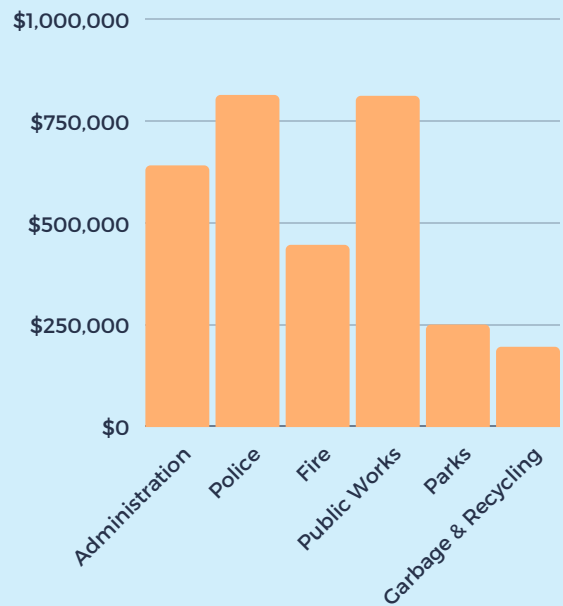
\$0.435

per \$100 of assessed value for a budgeted levy of \$1,920,000

STORMWATER \$73,000 BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022

The monthly stormwater fee collected goes toward infrastructure improvement, street and gutter cleaning, and maintains the Town's stormwater permit with the State of North Carolina

EXPENDITURES



HIGHWAY 64 - \$30,000

ROADS & POWELL BILL - \$1,000,000

LAUREL GREEN STREAM RESTORATION - \$56,166

WHEN DOES THE FISCAL YEAR BEGIN AND END?

Under NC law, our budget year begins on July 1 of this year and ends on June 30 of the following year.

FISCAL YEAR 2022

\$3,390,918

TOTAL BUDGET

COUNCIL ALLOCATING \$1,842,000 TO ROAD IMPROVEMENTS



A robust discussion was held during the Council retreat back in March. One of the main topics - Roads. Without a doubt, Laurel Park needs road improvements all over town. Whether its Timber Creek Drive or Arbutus Lane, our aging roads are deteriorating. The Town Council realizes this, and with the passage of the FY 2023 budget, has set aside \$1,842,000 for improvements.

Where is the money coming from?

- \$1,000,000 is coming from General Fund balance
- \$100,000 is coming from our Powell Bill allocation (a state distribution stemming from the gas tax)
- \$742,000 from the Town's share of the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds

THE PLAN WILL COME IN TWO PHASES

STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE: Phase one will focus on stormwater infrastructure under the roads. Up to 79 culverts will be replaced or repaired. Some culverts will require total replacement. These culverts will need to be dug out, requiring cutting into the road, replacing the culvert, then temporarily patching the roads back together. Other culverts can be "slip lined", inserting a new lining into the existing structure, which saves the road from having to be cut.



PAVING: Phase two will focus on paving. Needs will be ranked based on the Pavement Condition Assessment Summary conducted in 2021 by WGLA Engineering, PLLC.

The \$1,842,000 allocation is meant to jumpstart a 25-year cycle. This will require continued commitment from the Town, and continued investment. Such an investment may require pain, but in order to tackle this challenge, the Council is acting strategically by planning big and balancing fiscal responsibility.



As work continues on the Ecusta Trail, the many factors involved in the creation of it have been compiled in a "StoryMap" that you can view on the Friends of the Ecusta Trail (FOET) website and in the online newsletters. The StoryMap will be updated continuously so that the public can monitor the Trail's progress through its completion.

Visit www.ecustatrail.org for more information



Friends of Laurel Park

The Friends of Laurel Park have emerged from two years of Covid restrictions and are happy to resume our past activities and also add to them this year. We welcome the addition of two new board members, Susan Hileman and Kathy Martin.

Our music series has continued up at Jump Off Rock, with concerts scheduled from May to October. The music genres range from Rock n' Roll to Jazz to Country. Audiences so far this spring have been large, ranging from 150 - 200 people.

Some of the activities we have added:

- First Historical Shuttle Tour of Laurel Park
- Winter Walk at Lake Rhododendron Park
- Spring Nature Walk with seed planting
- SWAP event in partnership with the Town
- Signage upgrading at Lake Rhododendron Park
- Bringing in a food truck at future music events at Jump Off Rock

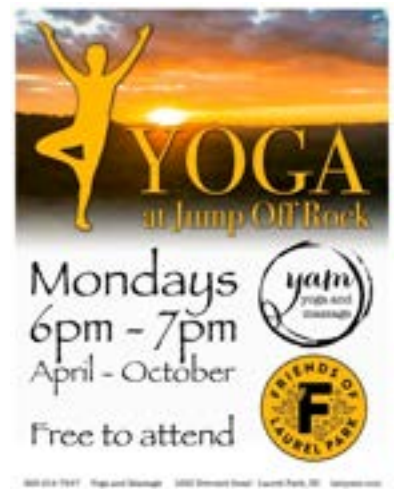
The Friends continue to coordinate activities with the Town; one of our board members serves on the Town's Centennial Committee and two members work with the Parks and Greenways Committee, on the walking trail improvements and maintenance.

Volunteers have been important to the Friends in developing the nature walks and in identifying where improvements are needed in park signage. Our annual fundraising campaign has been very successful in adding both sponsors and donors.

We appreciate the support we have received from our many residents and local businesses. We invite the public to send us emails about ways we might further help enhance our "Town on the Mountain."

Please let us know if you are willing to help us as a volunteer, whether as a one-timer or on an ongoing basis.

Our email is FriendsofLP@mail.com (note: *not* Gmail).



concert dates

August 10
September 10
October 8

Planning Board

As with many boards and committees, the Planning Boards' activity continued to be impacted by Covid-19, with a small number of items presented. In 2021 the Planning Board approved, and passed on to Council, a Unified Development Ordinance. The ordinance was studied and developed by a group comprised of members from the Town Council and Planning Board, with professional assistance over a period of two years. Their substantial investment of time in study and discussion resulted in a document that helps developers and protects our residents. However, when implemented, documents with the breadth and scope of the UDO usually need to be revisited. The Planning Board, along with staff and outside professional assistance, has made recommendations to Council for adjustments to the document to better fit both protection of the town and the needs of new development. As the existence of the Ecusta Trail becomes a reality, the Planning Board has discussed zoning in areas either adjacent to or in close proximity. This was taken into consideration when there was a rezoning request to a property being voluntarily annexed.

-Moyland Rainey, Chairman

Parks & Greenways

Members of the Parks and Greenways board are appointed to provide guidance and advice to the Town Council to protect and create open space within the Town. Current members, each serving a two-year term: Jenny Brown, Judy Lyons, Gary Anderson, Anne Hartig, Joe Robustelli, Denise Layfield, Todd Plessel.

Active throughout the year, with help from additional volunteers, our accomplishments are many.

- Glenn Rock Springs, our newest pocket park and expected to be completed this fall, will have a short trail connecting Echo Circle to Hebron.
- Laurel Green Park along Fifth Avenue is undergoing transformations with a concentration of pollinator plants and native species. Pruning and weeding have been periodic activities.
- Town Hall planting beds were redesigned, planted and weeded periodically.
- Rhododendron Lake Nature Park at the Primrose entrance parking lot was updated and improved with existing plants relocated. Weeding has been an ongoing project.
- Laurel Park signage entrance garden on Fifth Avenue was redesigned and replanted.
- Arbor Day was celebrated by planting ten native rhododendrons at Rhododendron Lake Nature Park, their namesake.
- Canal Park has plans underway to establish a pollinator garden.
- Laurel Park, officially designated a Bee City, has plans underway to foster a community that recognizes the importance of pollinators to our food supply and overall health of habitats.
- 30 bluebird boxes throughout our parks, the majority in Rhododendron Lake Nature Park, are monitored weekly to record the species of birds and their survival rates. These findings are reported to the North Carolina Bluebird Society which is dedicated to the future of the Eastern Bluebird and other cavity nesting birds that are native to NC.
- Invasive vines, threatening our tree canopy and the health of these trees, are an ongoing problem. Volunteers continue to work on vines on town property. An upcoming workshop, a management guide for all residents to learn how invasive vines are destroying our neighborhood, will be forthcoming. Contact Town Hall for further information. On Saturday, May 21, the P&G board hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Day picnic at Rhododendron Lake Nature Park. Burgers, hot dogs, sides, and beverages were enjoyed by 35 attendees. The following local businesses donated gift cards: Uncle Scott's Pizza, Roots Smoothie and Juice, The Book and the Bee, Cocula Mexican Restaurant, Crate Wine, Wild Birds Unlimited, Harris Teeter, and Echo Mountain Inn.

Board of Adjustment

Issues ranging from fencing, to non-conformity, to building distance from streets and property lines, to stormwater control were heard by the 7 member Laurel Park Board of Adjustment (BOA) in 11 hearings between July 2021 and June 2022. This was the largest number of hearings in a fiscal year throughout Laurel Park's nearly 100-year history and a direct reflection of near record building activity in Laurel Park well as implementation of the new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

Each hearing was conducted in the quasi-judicial manner required by North Carolina Statutory Standards and in accordance with Laurel Park guidelines to Ensure fairness to both the property owner and Laurel Park residents. This requires the Board to engage in continual updating and familiarization with General Assembly Statutes and Laurel Park Ordinance stipulations. Individual Board members also take special precautions to insure all decisions are rendered with complete impartiality.

Each issue brought to the Board is treated as unique and decisions do not set a precedent. Though the hearings are quasi-judicial, they are open to the public as is all Board discussion leading to a decision.

In addition to hearings, the Board participates in periodic training workshops such as was held in June, 2022. Six of the seven volunteer Board members are Laurel Park residents and appointed by Council to 3-year terms. The seventh member represents property owners in Laurel Park's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) and is appointed by the Henderson County Board of Commissioners.

Besides its responsibility for the conduct of Zoning Ordinance Hearings, the Board is also responsible for Appeals of Administrative actions, and Watershed Review. All Board decisions are final and any appeal would be made directly to Superior Court.

Due to the time and commitment required of Board of Adjustment members plus the responsibility taken by each member for decisions rendered, service on the Board plays a significant role in Laurel Park being the quality community we, as residents, desire.

ABC Board

The Laurel Park ABC Board is appointed by the Town Council and Serves at their pleasure. The Board has authority over the administration, real estate, personnel, and retail sales of liquor inside Laurel Park's corporate limits. It is an independent unit of government that assures responsible operation of the system within the boundaries of the laws and rules of North Carolina. The Board consists of three members serving staggered three-year terms.

It has been another good year at the Laurel Park ABC store, thanks to all of our loyal customers. Sales are up about 7.5% over last year, and restaurants and bars have reopened after several months of COVID shut downs last year. Even with some increased operating costs and some product shortages, we are projecting to distribute approximately \$105,000 to the Town of Laurel Park. In addition we will also distribute approximately \$16,000 to Laurel Park's Law Enforcement.

Thanks again to all of our customers' continued support. We look forward to another good year at Laurel Park ABC store.

-Robert Dulmage, Chair

STAY INFORMED

Keep up with what's happening in town by going to www.laurelpark.org. There you'll find meeting minutes, ordinances and you can sign up for Blackboard Connect, our message system that calls you and tells you about special events, trash holiday delays, town emergencies and more. You can also call us at Town Hall and we'll sign you up.

Mayor: J. Carey O’Cain

Mayor Pro-Tem: A. Paul Hansen

Commissioners:

Debra Bridges

George W. Banta

Kristin Dunn

Manager: Alex Carmichael

Town Clerk: Tamara Amin

Finance Officer: Heather Smith

Assistant to Town Manager: Jordan Jones

Police Chief: Bobbie Trotter

Public Works Director: Brandon Johnson

Town Hall: 693-4840

9:00 am – 5:00 pm Mon - Fri

City of Hendersonville Water/Sewer

Customer Service: **697-3052**

Leaks/Service Issue: **697-3073**

After Hours/Emergency: **891-7779**

Police Office: 692-9399

(non-emergency)

Police Non-Emergency: 697-3025

Valley Hill Fire: 692-2581

Town of Laurel Park
441 White Pine Drive
Laurel Park, NC 28739-0910

