



**Town Council  
Work Session Minutes  
September 12, 2024 – 9:30 a.m.**

Mayor O’Cain called the Work Session Council Meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. on September 12, 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
- Town Manager Cara Reeves
- Town Clerk Tamara Amin
- Finance Officer Kirk Medlin
- Police Chief Bobbie Trotter
- Public Works Director Brandon Johnson
- Crew Leader Matthew Pearce
- Parks Operation Coordinator Bryan Hensley
- Fire Chief Tim Garren
- NCSFS Ranger August Starck
- NCSFS Ranger Wesley Sketo
- Ms. Jennifer Brown- Prior Reserve
- Ms. Nancy McKinley- Prior Reserve

The following were absent:

- Commissioner Kristin Dunn

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Mayor O’Cain added Prior Reserve to the agenda under new business. Commissioner Banta moved to approve the amended agenda. Mayor O’Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **DISCUSSION OF FIRE BREAKS**

Fire Chief Tim Garren said the Town would like to strengthen our resiliency in the event of a wildfire. Due to our geography and abundance of vegetation, the importance of creating fire breaks is significant.

Ranger Starck said, after riding around with Fire Chief Garren, there are not too many areas that this would benefit. Ranger Starck asked to get a list of all HOA and point of contact personnel to speak to them about defensible space. Ranger Starck said they have Green Funding to do work and that \$250K in funding is available. Ranger Starck said they will come up with a game plan but does not believe the Town needs additional fire breaks.

Fire Chief Garren said it would help to get all the communities Firewise certified.

Mayor O’Cain asked Commissioner Bridges and Town Manager Reeves to send HOA information to Mr. Starck and Mr. Sketo and have Commissioner Bridges write something for the Newsletter.

## **PRIOR RESERVE**

Town Manager Cara Reeves said the Prior Reserve property owners went to Parks and Greenways and Planning Board. Both boards have passed their recommendations to Council.

*Fire Chief Garren Ranger Starck and Ranger Sketo left the meeting at 9:43 a.m.*

Ms. Jennifer Brown spoke about her frustration with the new UDO and not having a zoning officer here all the time.

Mayor Pro Tem Hansen explained that Council is working through the several issues with the UDO that need correction. The goals of the UDO are being achieved but the details need to be worked out.

Commissioner Bridges moved to approve the subdivision for Prior Preserve. Mayor O’Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

## **DISCUSSION ON DRAFT FUND BALANCE POLICY**

Finance Officer Medlin said there are many goals of establishing a Fund Balance Policy. They are related back to protecting the Town’s financial position.

- To establish minimum and targeted goal unassigned fund balance levels for the general operating fund that will provide sufficient financial flexibility and stability to meet future obligations, take advantage of opportunities, and avoid excessive interest expense through use of capital reserves in lieu of debt;
- To enhance the financial position of the Town in order to maintain the highest credit and bond ratings;
- To maintain reserves for periods of declining revenues and for emergencies such as weather-related disasters and unforeseen expenditures;
- To generate investment income that helps to diversify revenue streams;
- To ensure adequate availability of cash throughout the year;
- Create a shared understanding through a formal policy that clearly outlines intended use of excess fund balance.

After much discussion the Council decided to table this item.

**DISCUSSION ON REIMPLEMENTATION OF COVID-19 POLICY**

Town Manager Reeves said the Covid-19 Emergency Leave Policy established by the Council expired June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The policy granted up to 5 days of emergency leave for those employees who either contracted Covid-19 or cared for someone who contracted Covid-19. Staff recommends extending that policy to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Commissioner Bridges moved to approve extending the COVID-19 Policy until June 30, 2025. Mayor O’Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

**DISCUSSION ON ASHEVILLE REGIONAL AIRPORT**

Mayor Pro Tem Hansen said Ms. Mayr is hoping the Town will request the Asheville Airport Authority conduct an acoustic review of flight paths over these areas with the goal of reducing noise impacts to residents. Mayor Pro Tem Hansen said he went to talk to the airport manager two years ago and they could not do anything. Mayor Pro Tem Hansen did contact the Flight Standard District in Charlotte, and they will get back to him.

*Commissioner Dunn joined the meeting at 10:18 a.m.*

Mayor O’Cain asked Mayor Pro Tem Hansen to take Town Manager Reeves and another Commissioner to the meeting about the airport flight discussion.

**PROCLAMATION FOR SUICIDE AWARENESS MONTH**

Chief Bobbie Trotter said September is National Suicide Prevention Month – a time to remember the lives lost to suicide, acknowledge the millions more who have experienced suicidal thoughts, and the many individuals, families and communities that have been impacted by suicide. It’s also a time to raise awareness about suicide prevention and share messages of hope. During September, and throughout the year, we can care about suicide prevention; connect to community, culture, data, and research; and collaborate with others to address this public health problem that has impacted millions of Americans.

Chief Trotter said she joined the Suicide Response Team of Henderson County two months ago and would love if Council passed this Proclamation.

Mayor Pro Tem Hansen moved to proclaim September as Suicide Awareness Month. Mayor O’Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

**AGENDA REVIEW FOR THE COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULED FOR  
September 17, 2024**

Ms. Reeves said the Town Council will hold their regularly scheduled Town Council meeting on the third Tuesday of the month, September 17, 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. August Monthly Report
  - B. Minutes for the August 15, 2024 Work Session
  - C. Minutes for the August 20, 2024 Regular Meeting
  - D. Minutes for the August 20, 2024 Closed Session
  - E. Minutes for the September 3, 2024 Special Meeting
- 6. Old Business**
  - A. WXZ Discussion
- 7. New Business**
  - A. Friends of Laurel Park 2025 Concerts
- 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. Adjournment**

Council reviewed the draft agenda and asked to add:

- Discussion of ZOOM Membership
- Signage Discussion
- Comprehensive Plan
- .Gov Discussion

Council asked to have Mr. Chad Meadow look at the Legislature Bill and inform Council what they need to do.

**CLOSED SESSION**

Mayor Pro Tem Hansen moved that the Council enter Closed Session at 10:28 a.m. pursuant to [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a) (3)] consult with our attorney to protect the attorney-client privilege. Mayor O'Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

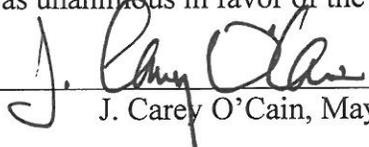
Mayor Pro Tem Hansen moved to reconvene the Work Session Meeting at 10:57 a.m. Mayor O'Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

The following were present at Town Hall:

- Mayor J. Carey O'Cain
- Mayor Pro-Tempore A. Paul Hansen
- Commissioner George Banta
- Commissioner Bridges
- Commissioner Dunn
- Town Manager Cara Reeves
- Town Clerk Amin

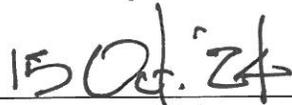
**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Commissioner Dunn moved to adjourn at 10:57 a.m. Mayor O'Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

  
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J. Carey O'Cain, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Cara Reeves  
Interim Town Manager

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date