

Wayne Dzwonchyk, *Commissioner*  
Roy P. Gilmore, *Commissioner*  
Douglas Redd, *Commissioner*  
Kenneth Ford, *Commissioner*  
Sharon Gibbs Cooper, *Commissioner*



Christina L. Cornwell, CPM, CEM, MEP,  
*Director/Emergency Manager*  
*Department of Emergency Management*

Lauren R. Thompson  
*Assistant Director*  
*Department of Emergency Management*

## **EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMISSION**

8103 Sandy Spring Road  
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# **Emergency Services Commission Meeting**

**March 18, 2026  
7:00 PM**

**In-Person Meeting  
Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center, Meeting Room 2  
8103 Sandy Spring Road, Laurel, MD 20707**

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **1. Roll Call**

- a. All Commissioners were in attendance.
  - i. Also present are:
    1. City of Laurel Department of Emergency Management (DEM)
      - a. Christina Cornwell, Director
      - b. Lauren Thompson, Assistant Director
    2. Laurel Police Department (LPD)
      - a. Chief Russell Hamill
    3. City of Laurel Department of Public Works (DPW)
      - a. Arman Safakhah, City Engineer
    4. City of Laurel Fire Marshal and Permit Services (FMPS)
      - a. Danny Selby, Director
    5. Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad (LVRS)
      - a. Chief Chris Ruehl
  - b. Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 21, 2026
    - i. A motion to approve the meeting minutes was made by Commissioner Ford. It was seconded by Commissioner Gibbs Cooper. All Commissioners voted in favor.

- ii. The meeting minutes from January 21, 2026 were approved.

## 2. Staff Reports

### a. Emergency Management (DEM)

- i. Director Cornwell gave an update regarding EOC activations for severe weather, which included Winter Storm Fern in January 2026 and the severe weather on 03.16.2026.
- ii. Event planning for the 151<sup>st</sup> Preakness and the Laurel Main Street Festival is on-going.
  - 1. The Laurel Board of Trade and several City of Laurel Departments conducted a walk-thru of Main Street to discuss placement of food trucks for safety purposes.
- iii. The City is working to improve its event planning process, which includes updating the event application and streamlining approval process.
- iv. The City's Community Rating System and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) are due for their 5-year certification, which occurs in October 2026.
  - 1. DEM is awaiting additional guidance from the Federal government and FEMA regarding this year's process.
- v. The Van Dusen Dam Plan is under its annual review, which is required by the Maryland Department of the Environment.
- vi. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant closes out December 2026.

### b. Fire Marshal and Permit Services (FMPS)

- i. Director Selby provided an update regarding construction of new town homes and single-family homes, including Laurel Gardens, which is expected to break ground in a week or so.
- ii. FMPS is working with the County to clearly define County and City jurisdictions and train new employees to understand those boundaries for code enforcement purposes.
  - 1. Issues arose in the aftermath of Winter Storm Fern with residents receiving warnings and/or fines from the County for failing to removal snow from sidewalks.

### c. Laurel Police Department

- i. There are 3 new officers going through the academy in Prince George's County.
- ii. Chief and LPD leadership has attended several events recently, which included:
  - 1. A conference that focused on speeding enforcement, immigration, and vehicle takeover events;
  - 2. The Chiefs of Police meeting, which was attended by Governor Moore; and
  - 3. The Safe Roads Task Force meeting.
- iii. LPD's Communication Dispatch Center is being refurbished.
  - 1. The center is receiving new flooring, workstations, furniture, paint, etc.

- iv. Chief Hamill provided an update regarding recent incidents and the outcome of some court cases.
- v. The LPD Citizens Academy is currently going on. There are approximately 20 participants. Local Fire and EMS recently taught CPR/AED. One of the participants utilized these skills and performed CPR at a restaurant in DC.
- d. Department of Public Works (DPW)
  - i. A brief overview of new construction and its effect on traffic and parking was provided by Chief Engineer Safakhah.
    - 1. Construction companies are required to have their own traffic study completed prior to beginning construction to ensure that roadways, traffic signage, and parking are adequate for the new housing community.
  - ii. DPW recently moved into a new facility on Lafayette Avenue.
  - iii. Chief Engineer Safakhah gave the Commission updates regarding on-going traffic and roadway improvement projects, which included in installing raised crosswalks, new signage, repairing cracks in the pavement, and adding additional street lighting.
  - iv. DPW completed the Van Dusen dam road repairs and several minor bridge repairs.
  - v. Bids have been received for Phase 3 of the Van Dusen Road project.
  - vi. Cherry lane parkway design for the next council meeting.
  - vii. Completed master plan revisions for 2026
  - viii. DPW is working to obtain the "Safe Streets for All" grant, which would allow the City to develop a comprehensive traffic safety plan.
  - ix. DPW is assisting FMPS with sediment and erosion control in several developments.
  - x. In order to enhance safety during the Laurel Main Street festival, DPW ordered planters to use as physical barriers.
    - 1. These barriers, which weigh 2,000 - 3,000lbs. when filled, will be used to mitigate vehicle intrusion during the event.
- e. Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad (LVRS)
  - i. LVRS received a new water rescue unit.
    - 1. It needs to get lettered and have the lights and radios installed.
    - 2. LVRS expects it to be in service by mid-April 2026.
  - ii. LVRS has been focusing recruitment efforts toward high school students as the summer is approaching.
  - iii. A contract has been signed to have a new fire engine built, but it will take at least 3 years for the order to be fulfilled.
  - iv. LVRS attended the Knights of Columbus awards ceremony recently. Members of the LVRS were awarded the EMT of the Year and Firefighter of the Year awards. The EMT is also being considered for the State award and will attend the upcoming State awards ceremony.

### 3. General Public Hearing

- a. The general public hearing was opened at 7:49 PM.
- b. The general public hearing was closed at 7:50 PM.

#### 4. Old Business

##### a. Recommendations to the City Budget

- i. The Commission submitted a letter to the Mayor urging the City to revive the grant program and increase the donation to Laurel Volunteer Fire Department and Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad.
  1. The Mayor agreed to revive the grant program but advised the Commission that the LVRS and LVFD would not be eligible. Instead, the grant needs to be offered to non-profit, faith-based, social welfare, and social organizations.
- ii. Ordinance currently states that the grant should be \$75,000, but does not say anything about non-profits, NGOs, and faith-based orgs.
- iii. Commission Gilmore made a motion that if the \$25,000 grant cannot be awarded to the Laurel Police Department, the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department, or the Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad, then the money should go to another City department with the capabilities to manage and award the grant. It is beyond the scope of the ESC.
  1. All commissioners are in favor; the motion carried.

#### 5. Schedule Next Meeting, Date, and Location

- a. The next meeting will occur on May 21, 2026 at 7:00 PM.
- b. This meeting will be held virtually via Zoom.

#### 6. Adjournment

- a. The meeting adjourned at 8:19 PM.