

PUBLIC SAFETY AND TRANSPORTATION
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, July 16, 2025, 7:00 P.M. – CITY HALL

Attendees: Chair Jeffrey Mills; Vice President Dove Robison, Laurel Volunteer Fire Department; Vicki Rambo, Don Gavick, Roy Smith, Stephen Slaughter, Melvin Lindsley, Sergeant Patrick Henson, Laurel Police Department; Arman Safakhah, Department of Public Works.

Guests: Chief Russ Hamil, Laurel Police Department; Deputy Chief Mark Plazinski, Laurel Police Department; Maria Morales, Clerk to the Council; Xavier Sykes, Senior Police Communications Supervisor; Ofc Pflieger, Laurel Police Department; Acting Lieutenant Rexine.

Minutes: The minutes were approved by Vice President Robison and seconded by Sergeant Henson.

Agenda Addition

A motion carried to add an open forum to all future meetings. The open forum was voted on and passed unanimously.

Drone Program

The city has four drones: two for the Emergency Response Team and two for the Drone First Responders program. There are currently 10 certified drone pilots. Stationed at two undisclosed locations, they launch immediately on in progress calls, fly autonomously, and reach any point in the city within two minutes.

Recent uses: locating and tracking a subject with multiple warrants, tracking a fleeing suspect leading to an arrest, supporting multiple July 4th arrests, and using infrared in an NBC featured human trafficking ERT raid to track the suspect and find the victim.

The proposed drone system includes advanced imaging capabilities, automated safety features, and docking/charging technology to support public safety operations. Flight data would be securely stored in accordance with existing department evidence retention policies, with all deployments documented. The agreement also includes replacement coverage for the initial drone units if they are damaged during operations. Similar drone programs are being implemented by several neighboring jurisdictions. A demonstration is planned for National Night Out, weather permitting. Drone operations will comply with applicable FAA regulations and licensing requirements.

Juvenile Takeovers

On July 5, the Laurel Police Department coordinated with the Maryland State Police and Prince George's County Police Department to respond to reports of a planned gathering involving juveniles. Agencies worked together to prevent the event from occurring. It was

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noted that similar incidents have been reported in communities across the country. Officials emphasized the importance of working with neighboring jurisdictions to address juvenile activity. The mayor's summer program continues on Saturday evenings through mid-August.

Transportation and Traffic Lights

The hospital area light still cycles rapidly despite an earlier fix and will be rechecked. An overnight blinking yellow request at the old hospital entrance was denied per DPW over speeding risk. All stop lights along Van Dusen Rd will be upgraded. Time expected to fix the blinking is 4–6 months out due to contracting.

Cherry Lane Fire Department Access

The station driveway is regularly blocked during school dropoffs and current signage is small. The city lacks an ordinance for yellow curb markings at fire entrances (hydrants only). Public Works will add striping and larger signage in-house.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:07 pm