

Public Safety & Transportation

Meeting Notes

THURSDAY, May 21, 2026, 7:00 P.M. – CITY HALL

Attendees: Councilmember Jeffery Mills; Chief Dove Robison, Laurel Volunteer Fire Department; Captain Clyde Williams, Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad; Seargent Henson, Laurel Police Department, Arman Safakhah, Department of Public Works; Ed Rowe; Stephen Slaughter; Vicki Rambow; and Don Gavelek.

Previous Minutes Approved By: Captain Clyde Williams

Seconded By: Ed Rowe

Public Safety and Crime Prevention

Juvenile accountability.

Concerns were raised about repeat offenses, including vehicle break-ins, where individuals are released without meaningful consequences. The State's Attorney's Office indicated it is working to strengthen accountability and deterrence measures for juvenile offenders.

Police work and the court process

Sgt. Henson emphasized that their role as officers is to enforce the law and make arrests, after which cases move into the court system. Significant effort goes into preparing cases for court, where even a small clerical error can create a loophole. Staff are actively exploring ideas to improve outcomes, noting that financial penalties often deter repeat behavior more effectively than warnings or probation alone.

Retail and transit theft

Committee Members discussed a rise in theft, attributed in part to changes in pursuit policies and to store and transit policies that discourage employees from intervening for safety reasons. It was noted that visible police presence at major retailers serves as an effective deterrent, and that theft ultimately raises costs for the entire community.

Security partnerships and technology

Sgt Henson discussed off-duty security arrangements at local retailers and plans to expand license plate reader (LPR) capability across the patrol fleet using existing car camera systems, following the model adopted by Montgomery County.

Traffic Safety and Enforcement

Stop sign compliance

Recurring violations were reported at several intersections, including Cypress at Oxford, Cypress at Westmeath, 7th Street, and Cypress at Mulberry, where some drivers pull into the crosswalk before stopping. Maryland law now allows certain municipalities to install stop sign cameras, particularly in school zones, with new data highlighting near misses involving children walking to school. The police department is reviewing this option, weighing community feedback from prior camera programs.

Enforcement funding

The department secured grant funding from the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to support overtime traffic enforcement, including DUI and speed enforcement patrols, with the state reimbursing the city for these costs.

Child passenger safety

Captain Williams reported an increase in child injuries from vehicle collisions, including children who were unrestrained. Through the Maryland Kids in Safety Seats (KISS) program, the department conduct car seat checks and distribute seats to families in need at community events.

State legislation

Sgt. Henson shared house Bill 107 (Intelligent Speed Assistance) is awaiting the Governor's signature. The bill would allow repeat offenders to have a GPS based device installed that prevents a vehicle from exceeding the posted speed limit, as an alternative to license suspension.

Loud vehicles

Officials noted that noise complaints have declined in some neighborhoods and that citations continue to be issued for excessively loud vehicles.

Roads, Signals, and Infrastructure

Traffic signals

Chief Robison flagged a signal timing issue on Van Dusen Road at Olive Branch Way and the former hospital entrance, where lights cycle unnecessarily during overnight hours, creating a potential hazard. The issue was reported to the city's signal contractor, who identified a programming glitch and is working on a fix. A flashing mode option during off-peak hours was suggested.

Van Dusen Road construction

Phase 3 of the Van Dusen Road project has been awarded. The project expands from the north side of Route 198 to Old Sandy Spring Road. The work includes replacing the existing span wire signal with a modern mast arm signal featuring updated cameras and pedestrian crossing signals.

Jurisdiction and maintenance

Several roadways within city boundaries including Routes 198, 197, and 1 fall under county or state jurisdiction. DPW confirmed they relay maintenance concerns to the agency responsible even when the city is not directly responsible. The county is scheduled to upgrade the signal at Contee Road and recently installed new sidewalk along that corridor.

Pedestrian access

Residents requested a sidewalk along Route 197 between Clubhouse Drive and Route 198. The city was encouraged to continue pressing the state to install it.

Parking concerns

Residents raised safety concerns about vehicles parking perpendicular to the curb in a cul-de-sac near Carriage Hill Drive and Old Sandy Spring Road, which could obstruct the roadway and delay emergency response. A shortage of accessible parking near restaurants in the First Watch area was also noted; staff suggested contacting the shopping center's management company to redistribute accessible spaces.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.