

The Honorable G. Rick Wilson, Chair
Dennis Grant Vice Chairman
John R. Kish
Council President Smith, Ex Officio Member
Bill Wellford
Stanley Spalding
Roy Smith, Alternate



Stephanie Anderson, City Solicitor

Jay Meashey, Director
Department of Economic and Community Development

CITY OF LAUREL PLANNING COMMISSION

8103 Sandy Spring Road • Laurel, MD 20707
301-725-5300 • www.cityoflaurel.org
Commission meets the Second Tuesday of each Month

SIX HUNDRED-TWENTY SECOND MEETING – REGULAR CITY OF LAUREL PLANNING COMMISSION TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026 6:00 P.M.

The meeting was held virtually through Zoom. Chairman Wilson presiding. The roll was called with Mr. Wellford, Mr. Grant and Mr. Smith present. From the Department of Economic & Community Development, Mr. Jay Meashey, Director, Ms. Raven Nee, Deputy Director, Mr. Connor Johnson, Planner III and Ms. Brooke Herring, Community Development Coordinator, were in attendance. There were approximately three (3) members of the public in attendance.

The minutes from the April 14, 2026, meeting were approved as written, on motion by Mr. Smith seconded by Mr. Wellford carried on a roll call vote of all members present.

The next item on the agenda was for Special Exception Application No. 981 for 349 Main Street Laurel, Maryland 20707, filed by Myste Lounge/OCPS, LLC., 349 Main Street Laurel, Maryland 20707. Mr. Johnson stated the applicant is seeking approval for an amendment to an existing Special Exception Approval No. 953, to increase the square footage of the use. The proposed hours of operation for the smoking lounge are as follows: Sunday-Thursday: 12:00 P.M. to 12:00 A.M. Friday - Saturday 12:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. The new maximum occupancy of the building will need to be posted upon the review of the Fire Marshal according to the adjusted square footage. ULDC Sec. 20-16.5– Schedule of parking requirements requires 1.0 parking space per 100 sq. ft. of the first 3,000 sq. ft. GFA. The applicant's floor plan of 1,388 sq ft requires fourteen (14) off-street parking spaces. The applicant provides 14 off-street parking spaces at the rear of the building. This fulfills the obligations of the schedule of parking requirements.

The managing partner of Myste Lounge, Mr. Temitope Popoola, 349 Main Street Laurel, Maryland 20707, stated that it was a pleasure to continue working with the City of Laurel, noting that the establishment has been serving the

community for approximately two (2) years. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet with the Commission again and stated an intention to continue maintaining a positive working relationship with the City.

Commission members referenced the staff report and asked whether the applicant had any objections to the stipulations outlined therein. The applicant responded that there were no objections and indicated that work on satisfying the stipulations had been ongoing for several months since the previous year. The applicant further stated that they had been working closely with City staff to ensure compliance and alignment with all requirements.

The Commission specifically addressed the stipulation concerning catered food service. Mr. Popoola confirmed the condition and acknowledged prior discussions with City officials regarding the incompatibility of food service operations within a smoking lounge environment.

Mr. Popoola also referenced a prior hearing held with the City and discussions conducted before the Board of Appeals. The applicant stated that the stipulations and operational expectations had been reviewed thoroughly during those proceedings.

Further discussion followed regarding compliance with prior decisions and conditions established by the Board of Appeals and related City authorities.

The Commission, on motion by Mr. Smith seconded by Mr. Wellford, and carried on a roll call vote of all members present, voted to **recommend approval** to the Board of Appeals on Special Exception Application No. 978 for 21 C Street Laurel, Maryland 20707, with all the conditions listed in the staff report.

The next agenda item was for Variance Application 982 for 113 St. Mary's Place Laurel, Maryland 20707, filed by Mr. Jeffrey Palumbo/Pallotti High School, 113 St. Mary's Place Laurel, Maryland 20707. Ms. Nee presented the staff report explaining that the applicant is seeking approval for a Variance from minimum net lot green area requirements per Sec. 20-6.16 of the Unified Land Development Code. The subject property is located at the intersection of Montgomery Street and Ninth Street, on a lot of approximately (6) six acres and zoned R-55 one-family detached residential zone. Section 20-5.2 of the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) empowers the Board of Appeals to grant variances from the strict application of this article only upon proof by a preponderance of the evidence that: 1) By reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape of specific parcels of property at the time of the original enactment of this article or amendments thereto or by reason of exceptional topographical conditions or other extraordinary situations or conditions of specific parcels of property, the strict application of these regulations would result in peculiar or unusual practical difficulties to, or exceptional or undue hardship upon, the owner of such property. 2) Such variance is the minimum reasonably necessary to overcome the aforesaid exceptional

conditions. 3) Such variance can be granted without substantial impairment to the intent, purpose, and integrity of the General Plan or any duly adopted and approved area Master Plan affecting the subject property. 4) Such variance will not be detrimental to the use and enjoyment of adjoining or neighboring properties.

Ms. Nee added, these provisions, however, shall not permit the Board to grant any variance to any setback or yard requirements for property zoned for commercial or industrial purposes when such property abuts or immediately adjoins any property zoned for residential purposes unless such residential property is proposed for commercial or industrial use on an adopted Master Plan. These provisions shall not be construed to permit the Board, under the guise of a variance, to authorize the use of the land not otherwise permitted. Currently the parcel does not meet Minimum Net Lot Green Area requirements, with 50.5% of current green space area (a difference of 14.5% from required 65% minimum), and Applicant is requesting an additional reduction to 44.7% green space area (a 5.3% further reduction). It would be impossible for the Applicant to build a theatre on the subject property in such a way that it would not further impact the Minimum Net Lot Green Area requirements as required by the ULDC. This is a result of the size of the parcel and not due to any action of the Applicant, which action would preclude the approval of a Variance application. By reason of the size of the specific parcel, the strict application of the above-mentioned regulation would result in unusual practical difficulty for the owner of the property. The Applicant's proposed development does not substantially impair the intent, purpose, or integrity as adopted in the relevant City plans and codes. The requested Variance will not be detrimental to the use and enjoyment of adjoining or neighboring properties since this parcel hosts a school; it is not accessible to the general public except at the discretion of the school. Therefore, it will not impact access to green space for any surrounding residents. In addition, Alice B. McCullough Field is a publicly owned green space adjacent to the site, which is fully accessible to the public and neighboring residents.

Chairman Wilson noted that the project had previously been reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission and subsequently by the Board of Appeals a few years ago, however the work was not completed.

Mr. Leonard Davis, contractor for the project, the Loughlin-Davis Contracting Group, LLC., 844 Ritchie Hwy, Suite 203 Severna Park, MD 21146, stated that he did not have any objections to the conditions attached to either the original variance approval or the current variance request. He further indicated that the previously required improvements and conditions had been addressed, including installation of the required parking facilities. Mr. Davis explained that the current request primarily related to one parking area associated with the proposed new theater building. He stated that the project was intended to follow the same design concepts and overall appearance originally reviewed and supported during prior proceedings before the Commission.

The Commission, on motion by Mr. Wellford, seconded by Mr. Smith, and carried on a roll call vote of all members present, voted to **recommend approval** of Variance Application No. 982 as presented in the Technical Staff Report.

The last item on the agenda was for other business. Economic & Community Development Director, Mr. Meashey, noted that several significant planning and zoning matters would be coming before the City of Laurel Planning Commission in the coming months. The Chair stated that additional discussions may also be necessary with new Commission members who were not present at the meeting. Mr. Meashey provided an overview of upcoming items anticipated to come before the Commission between the present date and September or October. He then advised the Commission that the City's Ten-Year Master Plan/Comprehensive Plan Update would soon return from review by the Maryland Department of Planning and the Prince George's County Planning Department. He explained that state law requires the Planning Commission to review and provide recommendations on the document before consideration by the City Council.

Mr. Meashey stated that comments from the State were anticipated in early August. Due to the City's traditional August recess, the draft plan and related comments would be distributed electronically to Commission members and posted on the City website for review prior to the September meeting. At that meeting, the Commission would be asked to recommend adoption of the plan to the City Council. The Director further explained that the City Council may adopt the plan as recommended, amend it, or return it to the Commission for further review and an additional public hearing if necessary. He also informed the Commission that two zoning text amendments would likely be presented in the near future. The first concerned Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), which the State of Maryland has required all jurisdictions with planning and zoning authority to permit under new legislation adopted during the 2025 legislative session.

Mr. Meashey then explained that the legislation prohibits municipalities from imposing unreasonable restrictions preventing ADUs and that staff are preparing a draft ordinance for City review. He described several forms ADUs may take, including detached structures, converted garages, and in-law suites attached to existing homes. The Commission was advised that issues under consideration included parking requirements, impacts within the historic district, infrastructure concerns, and overall housing density implications.

Chairman Wilson added that the purpose of the ADU legislation was to increase housing opportunities and affordability throughout the State. He noted that implementation could create challenges related to infrastructure, parking, and neighborhood compatibility, but stated that the City would work to manage the process responsibly and in accordance with State law.

Next, Mr. Meashey discussed recent updates to the Maryland Forest Conservation Act adopted by the General Assembly. He advised that the

legislation represented the most substantial revision to the Act in approximately twenty years and would require amendments to the City's Uniform Land Development Code. Staff indicated that work on the required ordinance amendments was already underway in coordination with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. He stated that although the City might not meet the statutory deadline for adoption, staff anticipated presenting the required amendments to the Commission no later than October. He further noted that no pending forest conservation plans were expected to be adversely affected during the interim period.

Chairman Wilson commended staff and consultants for their ongoing work on the Comprehensive Plan and related planning initiatives. He emphasized the importance of educating the Planning Commission, Board of Appeals, City Council, and the public regarding the upcoming issues and regulatory changes.

The Commission, on motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Wellford, and carried on a roll call vote of all members present, voted to adjourn.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Approved: *Brooke Herring*

Date: 6/9/2026

