

LAUREL LIVING

The Official Newsletter for the City of Laurel



Inside this Edition

 Mayor Sydnor grants wellness day to full-time City employees.

 Meet Laurel's new PGCPS Board representative, Dr. Tiffani Andorful.

 Laurel pools scheduled to open for summer with updated hours and events!

A Message from Mayor Keith R. Sydnor

The City of Laurel proudly joins the nation in observing Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month this May. This month is a time to honor the generations of AAPI individuals who have enriched America's history and are instrumental in its future success.

Throughout the month of May, we encourage residents to reflect on the cultural heritage, achievements, and civic leadership of the AAPI community. Laurel remains committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion as core principles that strengthen our community.

Trailblazers in Maryland and Prince George's County:

- **Aruna Miller** – The first Asian American elected to a statewide office in Maryland, currently serving as the 10th Lieutenant Governor of Maryland, and also the first South Asian woman elected statewide in the United States.
- **Susan Lee** – The first Asian American/Pacific Islander elected to the Maryland General Assembly, representing District 16 in both the House of Delegates and the Senate. She also became the first Asian American to serve as Maryland Secretary of State.
- **David Valderrama** – The first Asian American to serve in the Maryland State Legislature from Prince George's County, representing District 26 in the House of Delegates.
- **Wanika Fisher** – The first Asian American elected to the Prince George's County Council, representing District 2.
- **Amy Jean Chung Fry** – The first Asian American elected to the Cheverly Town Council, breaking barriers in local leadership.

As we celebrate these historic achievements, we also honor the many AAPI residents who contribute daily to the success of Laurel through entrepreneurship, education, healthcare, public service, and cultural enrichment.

Join us this month as we highlight local AAPI stories, support AAPI-owned businesses, and promote educational opportunities that celebrate the rich diversity of our community.



Proudly Serving You!



Council President
Kyla Clark
Ward 2



Council President Pro Tempore
Jeffrey Mills
Ward 2



Councilmember Christine Johnson
At-Large



Councilmember Adrian Simmons
Ward 1



Councilmember James Kole
Ward 1



Office of City Administrator
Christian L. Pulley, CPM
City Administrator
Ext. 2242



Office of the City Council
Sara Green, City Clerk
Ext. 2120



Budget and Personnel Services
Michele Saylor, Director
Ext. 2248



Communications
Natalie Williams, Director
Ext. 2208



Emergency Management
Christina Cornwell, Director
Ext. 2232



**Economic and Community
Development**
Monta Burrough, Director
Ext. 2301



**Fire Marshal and
Permit Services**
Danny Selby, Director
Ext. 2195



Information Technology
James Cornwell-Shiel, Director
Ext. 2240



Laurel Multiservice Center
Marchelle LeBlanc, Acting Director
Ext. 2723



Parks and Recreation
Bill Bailey, Director
Ext. 2233



Police Department
Russell Hamill, Chief
(301) 498-0092



Public Works
Thomas Helms, Acting Director
Ext. 3205

Special Announcement

Mayor Sydnor Announces All Full-Time Employees To Receive One Mental Health Day in Support of Personnel Wellness

In a groundbreaking initiative, Mayor Keith Sydnor has announced that every full-time city employee in Laurel will be granted one eight-hour day of administrative leave for personal wellness. This unprecedented move aims to promote mental wellness and acknowledges May as Mental Health Month. Employees can use this day between May 1, 2025 and June 30, 2025 by coordinating with their supervisor. Any unused hours will expire after June 30, 2025 and will not be carried over, emphasizing the city's commitment to creating a supportive work environment.

Mental health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being, yet it is often overlooked in the workplace. By promoting mental health days, the city aims to reduce stigma and encourage open conversations about mental health challenges. These initiatives are designed to empower employees to take care of their mental wellness, ultimately leading to a healthier, more productive workforce.



Mayor Sydnor Encourages Residents to “Move with the Mayor” This May

**MOVE
WITH THE
MAYOR**

Mayor Keith R. Sydnor is joining mayors across the country in the Move with the Mayor® Spring Mental Health and Physical Activity Challenge, a national initiative promoting the connection between physical activity, mental health, and social connection.

The challenge, which kicked off on May 1 in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, encourages residents to stay active through walking, biking, yoga, meditation, and other group activities that foster social engagement. “Physical activity combined with social connection is good for our hearts and minds,” said Mayor Sydnor. “They can help us cope with anxiety, depression, stress, and other mental health challenges. I invite all City of Laurel residents to commit to connecting and moving more with our community.”

As part of the initiative, Mayor Sydnor will participate in several public events throughout the month:

- May 7 – “Pilates” at Club Pilates in Towne Centre Laurel from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM
- May 11 – “3-Mile Walk” at Laurel Lakes starting at 9:00 AM
- May 17 – “Kids to Parks Day” from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM

According to the CDC, mental health is a key part of overall wellness. Regular physical activity and strong social connections can help reduce the risk of heart disease, improve mood, and enhance quality of life. “The research is clear,” said John M. Clymer, executive director of the National Forum. “Connecting with others while staying active makes a real difference in both mental and physical health.”



JOIN US

DISCOVERY COMMUNITY PARK

**THURSDAY
MAY 22**

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

City Hall in the Park is a vibrant and engaging community event where residents can voice their concerns, share ideas, and connect directly with the Mayor, City Council, and department heads in an open and welcoming setting.





City Hall in the Park Returns

Residents Turn Out for an Evening of Connection and Conversation w/ City Leaders

The first City Hall in the Park event of 2025 officially kicked off on Thursday, April 24th, at Granville Gude Park, and what a fantastic evening it was!

This signature community event brought residents together to engage directly with the Mayor, City Council, and Department Heads in an open, friendly setting. Neighbors of all ages came out not just to share their ideas and voice concerns, but also to enjoy the warm spring weather and connect with one another. From 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., the park was alive with energy! A DJ kept the vibes upbeat, kids lined up for colorful face painting, and families gathered to enjoy free hot dogs, hamburgers, and soft serve. The event perfectly blended civic engagement with community fun, giving everyone a reason to smile.

"Thank you to all the residents who came out to Granville Gude Park for our first City Hall in the Park of 2025," said Mayor Keith Sydnor. "Your energy, ideas, and enthusiasm are what make Laurel such a strong and connected community. It was truly a joy to spend the evening with so many of you—we're just getting started, and I can't wait to see even more of you at our next event!" Whether attendees came to meet city leaders, learn more about local initiatives, or simply enjoy a relaxing evening with friends and family, City Hall in the Park delivered on all fronts.



[Click here to see what happens when government meets the community where they are – literally!](#)

Meet Dr. Tiffani Andorful: District 1's New Voice on the Prince George's County School Board

In November 2024, Dr. Tiffani Andorful was elected to Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) as their District 1 Board of Education representative, which includes Scotchtown Hills Elementary School, Laurel Elementary School, and Laurel High School. The Washington, D.C. native and PGCPS graduate has dedicated her career to advancing educational equity and fostering collaboration through inclusive coalition-building efforts.

Laurel Living sat down with her and spoke of her journey to the PGCPS District 1 Board of Education representative and the importance of her job.

Laurel Living: You're a mom to two children: a current second grader and an incoming PGCPS student. What did you see as a mother that inspired you to run for this position?

Dr. Tiffani Andorful: "I'm a product of Prince George's County Public Schools, but now, as a mother, it really allows me to see our school system in a different light. There were a lot of similarities, from what I saw as a student and now from what I see as a mother. I knew there were a lot of questions that I just did not have the answers to. I wasn't sure where to get those answers. As parents, there are a multitude of questions we have when we're trying to make the best decision that we can for our children as it relates to education.

I saw an opportunity where I can assume a position on the front lines, dive in headfirst and try to make sure that I was asking the necessary questions not only for parents, but for community members more broadly. That's what really made me want to take that step, as a parent, and do what I could to get those questions answered and take the information I learned and make sure I was sharing those more broadly with the community."

LL: You taught social studies at Ballou High School, a now thriving high school in D.C. How did teaching social studies there inspire your path to education activism?

TA: "My experience as a teacher at Ballou was one of the most pivotal experiences of my life. My time at Ballou really allowed me to see how there were a lot of similarities between [my experience as a high school student and] the role of a teacher.



I was wearing different shoes, looking at different classes. Now I'm an educator and I'm able to say, 'What role do I play in helping shape the lives of these students?'

I saw that as a teacher, we truly have the ability to shape the lives of our students. We not only serve as teachers; we often serve as guidance counselors, we serve as therapists... There's just so many hats that educators wear. While I enjoy the opportunity to serve on a micro level, working directly with students, I wanted the opportunity to impact change on a larger scale. I was thinking about what specific changes could I help shape or put in place that would trickle down and have an impact on the lives of my students who were in the classrooms, all those who followed and my future children."

LL: You were the first in your family to graduate college. Do you want your journey to inspire students in similar situations whose parents didn't graduate college?

TA: "Of course. I do not take the experience I was afforded lightly. My mother, my grandmother, my great grandmother, my aunt, all of whom I lived with growing up, did everything they could to ensure I had a different experience than they had. My grandmother had an eighth-grade education. My mother is now in her second year of college. She was able to get her associate degree while I was in college, so I inspired her.

I think it's important to know for students or for children from similar backgrounds or maybe didn't have that example that they know anything is possible. The sky's the limit. This generation, there are so many more opportunities available. I truly hope I can, if nothing else, serve as an inspiration, even if in a small way. I was a very persistent child as my mother would always tell me. But did I think I would be here at this point? No. Did I have hopes that I would make a difference in the lives of whoever I could and then I would find my purpose? Certainly. So, I'm fortunate I'm at this point right now."

LL: You mentioned in an interview with The Diamondback, University of Maryland's student newspaper, that it was important to have teachers and parents' voices on the board, people who understand PG County firsthand and who are invested. How will you make sure all those people get involved?

TA: "I think having diverse perspectives on a board is extremely valuable. If you think about boards in general, there is true value in having diverse perspectives. When you think about having someone who brings a parent perspective, you think about someone who's bringing an educator's perspective, someone who's bringing in the perspective of having actually gone to the schools are all invaluable."

We cannot make decisions in a vacuum. While I may have had experience as an educator, while I may be a parent, I'm certainly not representative of all parents or community members. We have to ensure that we are actively seeking out their perspective, their opinions and their knowledge. I've made it a point to exert myself and attend as many events as I can, especially when it comes to some areas where I know there's some huge need. I'm doing everything, in short, to try to bring folks into the fold to educate. I'm also learning a lot from some of our more seasoned board members as to how to do that well."

LL: As a board member, you hope to create safer schools, enhance college readiness and attract and retain high-quality teachers. What specific ways will you ensure these goals are achieved?

TA: "Some of what I just referenced is one of the ways I have to make sure that I'm doubling down to ensure any of those things happen, which is going directly to those who will be impacted. There are a lot of great things happening within our district. In order to ensure that we are doing everything we can to ensure they're safe for schools is to actively engage with the administration that's working on all our safety initiatives. A lot of the work starts from hearing about school safety measures, some of the plans that have been put in place, actually learning and assessing some of the data that we have about what has been effective and what hasn't."

The role of a board member is rather complex. I think there are some misconceptions about what we are able to do. If I were to boil it down, quite simply, it is about us being able to provide oversight, governance and make sure we're asking the necessary questions to move work forward. There's a need to double down in some areas to make sure we're reaching those who are most in need and pushing forward some of those things that you need."

Watch our sit-down with PGCPS Board Member Dr. Andorful – Laurel's new voice in education.

 WATCH NOW



Applications Open Soon for Laurel's 2025 Mayor's Summer Job Program

The City of Laurel is pleased to announce the Mayor's Summer Job Program for 2025! This program offers valuable work experience for youth between the ages of 14 and 16. This initiative is designed to help young people explore potential career paths, build strong work habits, and contribute to the Laurel community.

KEY DATES:

- Job Postings: May 19–30
- Interviews: June 23–27
- Program Duration: July 7–August 8
- Hours: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS:

- Applicants must be between the ages of 14 and 16.
- Applicants must reside within the City of Laurel.
- Applications must be submitted online — no paper applications will be accepted.

DEPARTMENTS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

- Office of City Administrator
- Office of City Council
- Budget and Personnel Services
- Communications
- Emergency Management
- Economic and Community Development
- Fire Marshal and Permit Services
- Information Technology
- Laurel Multiservice Center
- Parks and Recreation
- Police Department
- Public Works

Don't miss out on this great opportunity to gain hands-on experience, build your skills, and make a difference in the community this summer!

**VISIT WWW.CITYOFLAUREL.ORG
MAY 19-30 TO APPLY!**

Honoring Heart of City Government Mayor Sydnor Thanks City Staff at 2025 Employee Appreciation Day

The City of Laurel recently hosted its annual Employee Appreciation Day, a cherished tradition that honors the dedication and hard work of its municipal workforce. Held on May 2, 2025, this special event took place at the Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center and featured delicious food from local food trucks and an awards ceremony.

Mayor Keith R. Sydnor and city staff from all departments gathered to celebrate employees who demonstrated outstanding service and commitment to the community. "We are grateful for all your contributions and dedication. Your passion is what helps make our community stronger. You are what makes the City of Laurel thrive," Mayor Sydnor said.

The Employee Appreciation Day is part of the city's broader commitment to recognizing and valuing its employees. The City of Laurel offers a comprehensive benefits package, including paid leave, health insurance options, a pension program, and educational assistance, to support its workforce. These efforts reflect the city's dedication to fostering a positive and supportive work environment.

This annual event not only acknowledges the hard work of city employees but also strengthens the bond between the city and its dedicated staff, ensuring continued excellence in serving the Laurel community.



Important Notice Passport Photo Price Adjustment Coming Soon

As the new fiscal year approaches, the City's Passport Office will implement a small pricing adjustment. Beginning July 1, 2025, the cost of passport photos will increase from \$10 to \$15.

While this is a modest change, the new rate remains competitive—still lower than many other providers. With the added convenience of having your photo taken on-site during your appointment, it continues to offer exceptional value for our residents. [Click Here for more information on our passport services.](#)





Splash Season Begins

City of Laurel Pools Open for Summer Fun with New Hours and Resident Perks

The City of Laurel is excited to announce the opening of its popular swimming pools for the summer season! Residents can enjoy the Laurel Municipal Pool (LMP), located at 9th and Main Street, and the Greenview Drive Pool Complex (GDP) at 14403 Greenview Drive.

Starting this summer, the pools will operate in alignment with the Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) schedule. **Weekday hours will be from 4 PM to 8 PM, while weekends will open from 2 PM to 8 PM. Regular summer hours will kick in from 12 PM to 8 PM on weekdays, with LMP offering extended hours on Tuesdays from 2 PM to 8 PM and GDP opening on Mondays from 2 PM to 8 PM. The pools will remain open until Labor Day Monday.**

To enhance community engagement, the pools will allow only City of Laurel residents and pass holders admission from 12 PM to 2 PM on Saturdays and Sundays. In addition to swimming, residents can participate in various activities such as water aerobics and learn-to-swim courses. Swim team announcements and other exciting events will be shared on the city's parks and recreation website and social media channels.

For updated admission fees, registration information, and holiday closures, visit the City of Laurel's Parks and Recreation website at www.cityoflaurel.org Stay connected via social media: Facebook (@LaurelParksRec), Instagram (@LaurelDeptParksRec), X (@LaurelParksRec), and YouTube (City of Laurel Parks & Rec MD). Dive into summer fun in Laurel!



In Case You Missed It Lakefest 2025

The City of Laurel kicked off its boating season with a splash at the annual Lakefest celebration on Saturday, May 3, 2025, at Granville Gude Park.

[WATCH NOW](#)

FREE Summer Concert Series Granville Gude Park

Get ready for a summer filled with music and fun at Granville Gude Park!

This fantastic free summer concert series invites the public of all ages to enjoy live outdoor performances in a beautiful setting.

Don't forget to bring your lawn chair for a comfortable evening under the stars!

Friday, June 20th Hi-Fi! Soul Band



Friday, August 8th Spanglish American Band



Where Laurel Comes Together

Celebrating National Public Works Week 2025: "People, Purpose, Presence"

National Public Works Week (NPWW) 2025 is fast approaching, and it's time to recognize the critical role that the City of Laurel's public works professionals play in shaping and sustaining the communities we live in. Celebrated from May 18-24, 2025, this year's theme, "People, Purpose, Presence," honors the dedication, passion, and impact of the public works workforce.

What is National Public Works Week?

Since 1960, the American Public Works Association (APWA) has spearheaded the celebration of National Public Works Week to raise awareness about the essential work done by public works professionals. From water treatment and transportation infrastructure to waste management and public safety, public works are the backbone of every community's quality of life.

The theme of "People, Purpose, Presence" highlights the cornerstone values that drive public works professionals:

- **People:** Meeting the needs of our communities with service, care, and dedication.
- **Purpose:** The reason behind public works—the vital role of improving life in every corner of the community.
- **Presence:** The ever-present efforts of public works professionals that often go unnoticed but are essential to keeping cities, towns, and municipalities running smoothly.



Acting Director of the City's Department of Public Works, Thomas Helms, applauded the dedication of Laurel's DPW workers: "At Public Works, we are proud to be blue-collar workers. It's not about who's better; it's about knowing that not everyone can do what we do. While others plan, we build. While others manage, we fix. Our hands, our sweat, and our skills keep everything moving. There's pride in every callus and every shift. Without us, the gears don't turn."

Public Works in Action

Public works encompass a wide array of services that ensure the smooth operation of local communities. This can range from the construction of roads and bridges to maintaining clean drinking water and ensuring safe waste disposal. Public works professionals are often the unsung heroes who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that these essential services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

Many times, public works professionals will never meet the people whose lives they impact. Yet, when everything is functioning as it should, the work of public works is invisible—often taken for granted. Nevertheless, their presence is constant, ensuring the daily needs of our residents are met and the community continues to thrive.



[Click here to celebrate the unsung heroes of our community's infrastructure. Go Inside DPW.](#)

Reflection and Remembrance

Honoring National Police Week: May 11-17, 2025



Each May, our nation pauses to recognize the service and sacrifice of law enforcement officers through National Police Week, and in 2025, the City of Laurel will once again take part in this important observance by attending in-person events in Washington, D.C.

Hosted by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), this year's commemorations include the 37th Annual Candlelight Vigil, which will take place on Tuesday, May 13, honoring the brave men and women whose names have recently been added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

"National Police Week is always very important to law enforcement, their families, and especially survivors of the fallen. It's only proper that we take a moment every year to remember our fallen, their families, and remember the sacrifices so many people make in order to keep all of us safer in our communities," says Laurel Police Chief Hamill. "I would encourage everybody during the week of May 15th to take a moment and remember the sacrifice somebody made for you, so that you can be safe in your community, so that we can enjoy the freedoms provided to us every day. I've worked with a number of officers that we've had to lay to rest after sacrificing their lives, and it is not without meaning, it's not without importance, it really matters."

Each year, National Police Week draws tens of thousands of officers from around the world to Washington, D.C. Together, they attend ceremonies and events that serve as powerful reminders of the courage, dedication, and ultimate sacrifice made by law enforcement personnel in the line of duty.

This observance was first established in 1962, when President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation declaring May 15 as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the week in which it falls as National Police Week. The City of Laurel is proud to stand in solidarity with law enforcement professionals and to honor the legacy of those who have given their lives in the service of others.

From Service to Strength *Congratulations!* City of Laurel's Deputy Chief Mark Plazinski Completes Boston Marathon



The City of Laurel is proud to recognize Deputy Chief Mark Plazinski for completing the 2025 Boston Marathon, one of the most prestigious and challenging races in the world. Deputy Chief Plazinski demonstrated remarkable dedication, endurance, and perseverance. His commitment to personal fitness mirrors the strength and discipline he brings to the Laurel Police Department each day.

Please join us in congratulating Deputy Chief Plazinski on this outstanding achievement!



Local Tribute, National Honor

Mayor Keith Sydnor and the City of Laurel Honor the Legacy of the Trailblazing 6888th Battalion Ahead of the Congressional Gold Medal by Congress



On Monday, April 28, the City of Laurel and Mayor Keith R. Sydnor welcomed family members and supporters of the historic 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion to the Laurel Municipal Center to honor their service and legacy. The ceremony recognized the Battalion's recent awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal—one of the nation's highest civilian honors.

The 6888th, known as the "Six Triple Eight," was the only all-Black, all-female unit to serve overseas during World War II. Over 800 women from the Women's Army Corps were deployed to Europe in 1945, where they played a vital role in processing backlogged mail for U.S. troops. In Birmingham, England, they cleared more than 17 million pieces of mail in just three months—half the time the Army projected. Their motto, "No mail, low morale," reflected the importance of their mission in maintaining soldiers' spirits during wartime.

Laurel Mayor Keith Sydnor, a military veteran, spoke passionately about the significance of recognizing this overlooked chapter in American history. "You can't leave out certain parts of history, because that's what motivates people. That's what motivates me," he said.

Family members shared personal memories of their loved ones who served in the 6888th. Brenda Partridge Brown, daughter of battalion member Willie Belle Irvin, described discovering the full impact of her mother's military service years after her passing. "There were a lot of stories told. I gathered them up and composed a little book about her and her memories," she said.

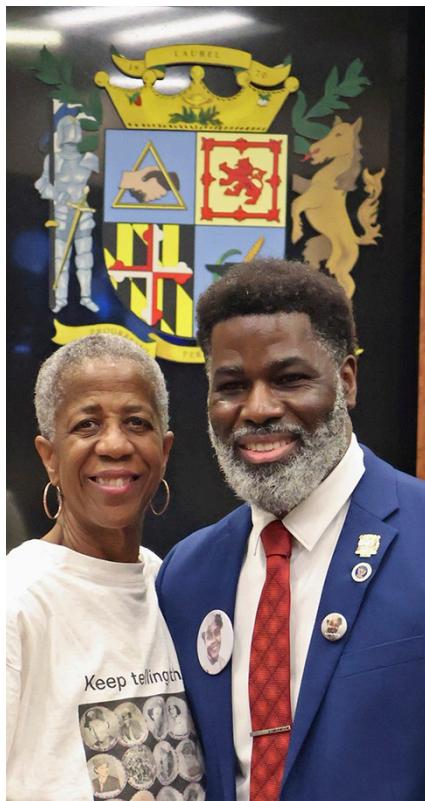
Colonel Yolanda Gore, the first woman and second person of color to serve as Fort Meade Garrison Commander, credited the 6888th for paving the way for her achievements. "Those 850 Black women stood up against racism, bigotry, and doubt. It is the only reason I'm standing here," Gore said. Only two members of the battalion are alive today. Retired Major Fannie McClendon, 104, was represented at the event by her niece, Dianne Mouton-Allen, who likened the recognition of her aunt and fellow soldiers to the spirit of Hidden Figures: "She helped to set the tone for the young people today."

To ensure their story is remembered, District 21 Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk sponsored legislation establishing March 9 as 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day in Maryland.

On April 29, 2025, the U.S. Congress officially awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to the 6888th Battalion in a ceremony at Emancipation Hall in Washington, D.C. This recognition came 80 years after their deployment and decades of advocacy to acknowledge their contributions.



[Click here to see the full ceremony honoring the legacy of the 6888th Battalion.](#)





Connecting Community Sydnor Administration Observes Fair Housing Month with Action

In recognition of Fair Housing Month, the City of Laurel held a community-focused Fair Housing and Resources Event at the Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center. The event brought together a wide range of organizations—from banking institutions and mental health care providers to legal aid representatives and members of the sheriff's department—to support both landlords and tenants with valuable tools and information.

Open to all local residents, the event served as a one-stop shop for those seeking guidance on housing rights, financial empowerment, legal assistance, and wellness services. Nonprofits in attendance highlighted that many families are still recovering from the lasting economic and emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This event aimed to bridge those gaps by connecting residents directly with the resources they need to thrive.

Mayor Keith Sydnor, a longtime advocate for community upliftment, emphasized that fair housing goes beyond access to a home—it includes access to opportunity, equity, and dignity. "It's our responsibility not only to educate but to empower," said Mayor Sydnor. "Events like this encourage residents to take advantage of what's available and remind them they're not alone in their journey."

As part of its ongoing commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, the City of Laurel will continue to offer programming that informs and equips residents with essential knowledge and support. Fair Housing Month is not just a moment of reflection—it's a call to action, reminding us all of the importance of safe, stable, and fair housing for every member of our community.



Missed Laurel's Department of Economic and Community Development's Fair Housing event? Here's what happened.

Greener Laurel

City Earns Grant, Donation, and Award for Sustainability Efforts



The City of Laurel has received two major environmental recognitions and a meaningful donation supporting its green initiatives.

The Chesapeake Bay Trust awarded the City an \$18,000 grant to boost public involvement in environmental restoration and awareness, with activities planned for events like the Laurel Farmer's Market. Additionally, BGE, in partnership with Greenlite, donated 3,000 water aeration kits to Laurel residents. The kits—designed to save water and energy—will be distributed at upcoming City events, one per household.

Michele Blair, the City's Sustainability Manager, was also recently honored with the Waste Diversion and Recycling Award from Prince George's County's Department of the Environment and Keep Prince George's County Beautiful (KPGCB). Her leadership in securing grants and driving local conservation efforts has played a key role in Laurel's environmental success.

These honors and contributions collectively highlight Laurel's proactive leadership in sustainability and its dedication to creating a cleaner, greener future for all residents.

Fresh Start, Familiar Faces

Laurel Farmers Market Opens for 2025 with Music, Flavor, and Local Flair

The City of Laurel Farmers Market kicked off its 2025 season on Thursday, May 1, drawing a vibrant crowd to the Quill Lot at 378 Main Street. The market showcased a diverse array of vendors offering fresh produce, artisanal goods, and ready-to-eat foods and live music from Mike Walls, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Regular vendors like Coco & Soy Candle Company and Bella Vita Farm returned, delighting market goers with their wonderful scents and delicious produce. They were joined by many new participants, like Tasty Toucan, an ice cream cart serving refreshing frozen treats and m00dswingz, a soul food stand who gave free samples of their Pomegranate BBQ Sauce, reflecting the market's growth and community support. With plans for monthly cooking demonstrations and workshops, the Laurel Farmers Market continues to be a hub for local culture and commerce.

The Laurel Farmers Market will run every Thursday from 3-7pm until October 16, 2025 at 378 Main Street. The market also accepts SNAP and EBT benefits, ensuring accessibility for all residents.



Enhancing Community Preparedness

Be Prepared: Severe Storms and the 2025 Atlantic Hurricane Season

June 1st marks the start of the Atlantic Hurricane Season with preliminary outlooks calling for 17 named storms, nine (9) of which may be hurricanes. Four (4) of the hurricanes could be major hurricanes, with a categorical intensity of 3 or higher. The season ends November 30th. Although Maryland may not be impacted by as many tropical storms and hurricanes as southern states, damaging severe weather can still occur. With its varied geographies and numerous waterways, Maryland can be impacted by hazards such as flooding, hail, tornadoes, lightning, and high winds. Of these hazards, flooding is the number one weather-related hazard for the State of Maryland.

In preparation for the severe weather associated with hurricane season and the summer months, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Weather Service (NWS), and the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) host two awareness weeks aimed at educating the public and providing preparedness resources. The first of these weeks, Severe Storms Awareness Week, occurred from April 7 – 13, 2025. Each day of the week explored a different aspect of severe storms, what they mean, how they work, and what citizens can do to prepare. The hazards discussed were flooding, damaging winds, tornadoes, hail, and lightning.

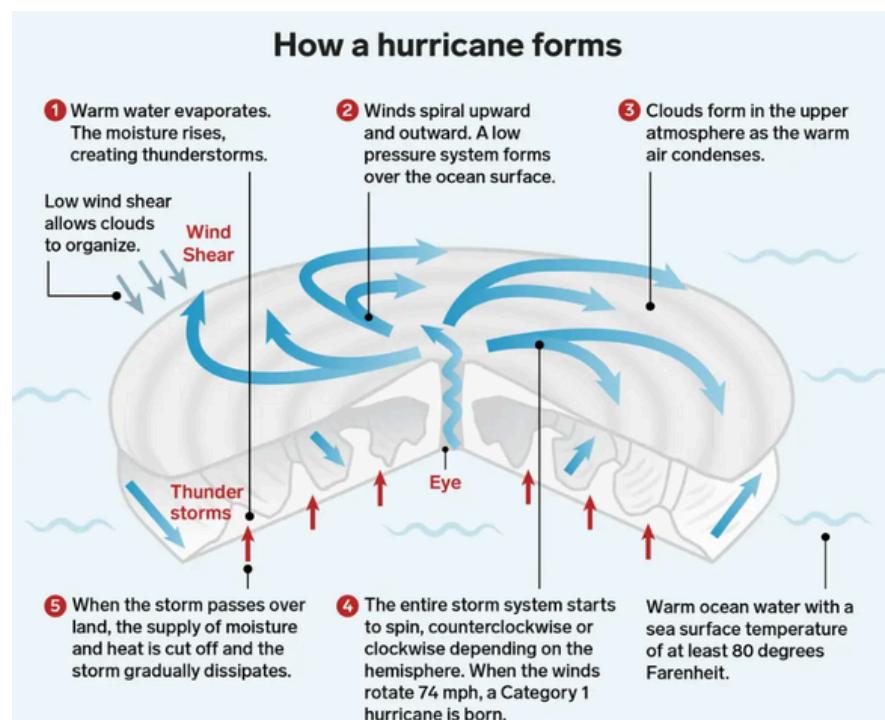
National Hurricane Preparedness Week will occur from May 4 – May 10, 2025. The goal of Hurricane Preparedness Week is to improve the nation's readiness, responsiveness, and overall resilience against hurricanes during the upcoming season. This year's scheduled topics include:

- 💧 Know Your Risk: Wind & Water
- 💧 Prepare Before Hurricane Season
- 💧 Understand Forecast Information
- 💧 Get Moving When a Storm Threatens
- 💧 Stay Protected During Storms
- 💧 Use Caution After Storms
- 💧 Take Action Today

Remember that it only takes ONE storm to cause significant damage. Each and every year it is important for citizens to prepare their families, friends, and communities to respond to and recover from severe weather events.



To learn more about severe weather, please visit <https://mdem.maryland.gov/Pages/severe-storms-week.aspx>.



For more information and to participate in this year's National Hurricane Preparedness Week, please visit <https://www.noaa.gov/hurricane-prep>.

Safety is a Shared Responsibility

National Dam Safety Awareness Day: Recognizing the Risks

The issue of dam safety was not widely recognized until 1889 when the South Fork Dam failed, flooding the nearby town of Johnstown, Pennsylvania with more than 20,000,000 tons of water. The wave of water measured 35 – 40 feet high and hit the town at 40 miles per hour. As a result, the flood killed approximately 2,200 people and caused more than \$17 million in property damage. The incident response was the first major peacetime disaster relief effort for the American Red Cross, whose efforts were led by Clara Barton. In remembrance of this tragedy, Dam Safety Awareness Day is observed each year on May 31st.



Established in 1999, National Dam Safety Awareness Day's primary goal is to encourage individual and community responsibility for dam safety and to provide information on what steps can be taken to prevent future catastrophic dam failures. A secondary goal is to promote the benefits that dams offer to communities. Benefits of dams include water supply for domestic, agricultural, industrial, and community use; flood mitigation; clean, renewable energy through hydropower; and recreation.



The City of Laurel is situated below the T. Howard Duckett Dam, which is opened and operated by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) Water. In an effort to mitigate against and prepare for a dam failure, WSSC Water shares its Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with the City of Laurel Department of Emergency Management (DEM). DEM also participates in tabletop exercises, which test WSSC's plan to identify and resolve resource and procedures gaps. In 2023, the Dam received several concrete fortification upgrades, which will help the Dam withstand a 1 in 10,000-year flood, otherwise known as a Probable Maximum Flood (PMF). PMF is defined as 32 inches of rain falling over a 72-hour period.

To learn more about the T. Howard Duckett Dam, please visit <https://www.wsscwater.com/dams>. Information regarding National Dam Safety Awareness Day can be found at <https://damsafety.org/NDSAD>.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR FAMILY FOR AN EMERGENCY

KNOW.

ACQUIRE.

PREPARE.

Evacuation Routes



Notification Systems



Meeting Locations



Contact Information



Breaker Boxes; Shut-off Valves



Your Neighbours



Radio – Battery or Hand Crank



Alternative Footwear



ID & Important Papers



Those Needing Assistance



Extinguisher Location



Extra Cash (Small Bills)



Flashlight & Spare Batteries



Baby Formula & Diapers



Pet Supplies



Cell Phone & Portable Charger



Place your emergency kit in an easily accessible location.



72 Hour Supply of Water & Food (Non-Perishable)



COUNCIL

Connections



The City Council is the legislative body of the City of Laurel, and as elected representatives of the citizens, consider and enact resolutions, regulations, and ordinances for the protection of rights and privileges, peace and good government, and safety and health of all citizens. Visit www.cityoflaurel.org to find out more about your representative.



The following items were approved at the April 28th Mayor and City Council meeting.

- 4-2025 - A Resolution of the Mayor and City Council of Laurel, Maryland to Set the Date, Time and Polling Location for Early Voting in the City of Laurel for the General Election of November 2025.
- 5-2025 - A Resolution of the Mayor and City Council of Laurel, Maryland to Pay Tribute to Emancipation Day

May 2025 Meetings

- **Wednesday, May 7 @ 6pm (Virtual)**
Mayor and City Council Work Session
- **Monday, May 12 @ 6pm (Virtual)**
Mayor and City Council Meeting
- **Monday, May 28 @ 6pm (In-Person)**
Mayor and City Council Meeting

Upcoming Legislation and Action Items

- **Bid Recommendation** - LA25-008- Independence Day Fireworks- 2025- Laurel 4th of July Committee
- **Bid Recommendation** - Replacement of Granville Gude Park Lake Fountains- Department of Parks and Recreation
- **Bid Recommendation** - Van Dusen Road Improvement Project- Phase 1 Engineering Services- Department of Public Works
- **Bid Recommendation** - Van Dusen Road Improvement Project- Phase 2 Engineering Services- Department of Public Works
- **Fleet Acquisition** - Grapple Truck- Department of Public Works
- **Ordinance No. 2041** - An Ordinance Adopting the General Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program of the Mayor and City Council of Laurel, Maryland, for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 and to Levy Property Taxes; and to Authorize the Collection of Such Taxes

To watch the latest Mayor and City Council Meeting, visit our YouTube page [@LaurelTVOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/@LaurelTVOfficial). All Mayor and City Council Meetings are broadcast live on Comcast 71 (SD), 996 (HD), and on Verizon Channel 12. Meetings are also live streamed on LaurelTV.org.



Kyla Clark, Council President, Ward 2

- Elected to first term on Laurel City Council on November 7, 2023
- Resident of the City of Laurel for over 9 years
- Vice Chair, City of Laurel Environmental Committee
- Member, City of Laurel's Persons with Disabilities Committee
- MBA in Global Business and International Marketing, AIU
- B.S. Business Administration and Marketing, Le Moyne College

Dear Neighbors,

This month, we celebrate our educators during Teacher Appreciation Week and reflect on the service and sacrifice of our veterans on Memorial Day. It's also a time to reconnect with neighbors—through community clean-ups, local events, and time spent in our beautiful parks and green spaces. As your Council President, I'm honored to serve and committed to building a stronger, more connected Laurel. The Council is focused on thoughtful growth, public safety, and supporting the vibrant community we all call home. Thank you for staying active and engaged!

Email Me: kclark@laurel.md.us or text 443-972-0046

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR BACKYARD!

- Want to give back to your community? The City of Laurel's Education Advisory Committee is seeking new members! To apply, email your resume and the name of the committee you're interested in to laurelmayor@laurel.md.us. Get involved and help make a difference in Laurel's future!
- Behind on your WSSC water bill? The Get Current program is back! Customers with delinquent water or sewer bills can get up to 50% bill credit and get 100% of late payment charges and turn-on fees waived. Learn more at <http://wsscwater.com/getcurrent>.

RESIDENT Q&A

Question: How can I help and support the residents affected by the Laurel Garden Apartment fire?

Answer: To our neighbors affected by the recent fire—and anyone in need—please know you're not alone. The City of Laurel is here for you.

If you or someone you know needs assistance, or if you'd like to help, contact Ms. Marchelle LeBlanc, Director of Human Services, at mleblanc@laurel.md.us or call 301-974-3010.

At the Laurel Multiservice Center (LMSC), we're offering:

- Hot meals: Mon–Fri, 6:00–7:15 PM
- Clothing and hygiene supplies
- Shower facilities: 9:00 AM–7:00 PM
- Laundry services: 9:00 AM–5:00 PM

To volunteer, please reach out using the contact above.

This is what community looks like—neighbors helping neighbors. Please share.



Big thanks to everyone who joined in for Earth Day Cleanup!



A snippet from Women's History Month featuring the Mayor, Council and of course Congressman Glenn Ivey!

Upcoming Ward 2 Events:

5/10 Main Street Festival @ 9:00am-4:00pm
13910 Laurel Lakes Avenue, Laurel, MD 20707

5/16 Music at The Mansion @ 6:00pm
13910 Laurel Lakes Avenue, Laurel, MD 20707

5/24 Kiddie/Kidz Flag Football @ 9:30am
Sturgis Moore Field
497 8th Street, Laurel, MD 20707



Jeffrey Mills, President Pro Tempore, Ward 2

- Elected to first term on Laurel City Council on November 7, 2023
- Chair, Public Safety Transportation Committee
- Member, Tree Board; Ex-Officio Member, Juneteenth Celebration Committee
- Attended Prince George's and Howard County Community Colleges
- Member, Toastmaster International
- Published Author "Pushed Into Purpose"

Happy Spring City of Laurel,

May you find this letter in good health and happiness. We have a major problem with not being able to find volunteers for the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department. People are not inspired to help within our communities and this is a major problem for us all. I am looking for thinkers that think outside of the box to resolve the issues that have plagued our city.

On another note, we should be grateful for our Laurel Police Department that are working vigorously to protect our community, families and properties. We should be tired of allowing criminals coming into our city committing acts of violence and crimes. The days of being soft on crime in the City of Laurel is over. As always, if you have any questions or need assistance, please email me at jmills@laurel.md.us. **Click here to watch my full interview on Laurel TV.**

Upcoming Events:

6/7 City of Laurel Job Fair @ 10am-2pm
Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center

6/14 100 Fathers Day Breakfast @ 10am-12noon
Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center





James Kole, Council Member, Ward 1

- Moved to City of Laurel in 2016
- B.S. Landscape Contracting/Horticulture - Penn State University
- Elected to City of Laurel City Council - November 2021
- Served as Council President - November 2023 to November 2024
- Chair, City of Laurel Environmental Affairs Committee
- National League of Cities - Finance, Administration, and Intergovernmental Relations - Committee Member

Hello, Laurel! May brings fresh energy and new opportunities for us to work together and strengthen our city. I'm committed to keeping you informed and engaged, whether through policy updates, community events, or conversations about the issues that matter most. Let's keep the momentum going! Follow me on my official City social media @CouncilmanKole for the latest news and ways to get involved. [Click here to watch my latest interview on Laurel TV!](#)

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR BACKYARD!

- In March, I attended the National League of Cities (NLC) Congressional Cities Conference in Washington, D.C., to advocate for Laurel. Laurel was the first city in the nation to pass a resolution supporting the preservation of the federal tax exemption of municipal bonds, a crucial tool for funding infrastructure.
- I encouraged other cities and state municipal leagues to take similar action, as protecting municipal bonds remains NLC's top priority. These bonds are essential for building and repairing infrastructure, and losing their tax-exempt status would raise costs for taxpayers. I remain committed to fiscal responsibility for Laurel's residents.



RESIDENT Q&A

Question: I feel helpless under the current federal administration. What can I do to make a difference?

Answer: Get involved! Many advocacy groups and volunteer organizations need your help today. Volunteerism has declined in recent years, yet it remains the most effective way to create change. You can't make change from home—real impact requires action. Whether you're passionate about education, public safety, the environment, or social justice, there are many ways to contribute. Join a local nonprofit, serve on a government committee (local, county, or state), or engage with local political parties. Attend city council meetings, support grassroots initiatives, and encourage others to get involved. Small, consistent efforts add up—your voice and actions can truly make a difference in your community.



ADRIAN G. SIMMONS

- Elected to first term on Laurel City Council on July 1, 2024
- Member, Historic District Commission; Ex-Officio Member, Planning Commission
- Born and raised in South Laurel
- BBA, Accounting/MBA, Finance - Loyola University Maryland
- Member, Laurel Board of Trade and the Maryland Association of CPAs.

Dear Residents,

I always love May when both nature and activities 'spring' to life! For our family, that means t-ball league has arrived, camping opportunities with the Cub Scouts, enjoying more outdoors time at our local parks, cookouts with friends & family, and more. On that note: A reminder that you can rent out pavilions at our parks and rooms at our pools for your family or group gatherings by calling Parks & Rec at 301-725-7800.

Some City Council news items to share with you as well: I'm happy to report that my legislation to remove the 5-year limit for seniors & veterans to claim their property tax credit passed. Plus two important items are coming in May: our election law re-write and our City budget. **[Click here to watch my latest interview on Laurel TV!](#)**



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR BACKYARD!

- I was able to attend the "Preakness Preview" race at Laurel Park on April 19 where our contingent met the lead planner for the Preakness Festival and got a hint of what they're planning for the Preakness' 150-year anniversary to be celebrated in Laurel come May 2026!
- Our monthly "City Hall in the Park" series kicked off in April and I'll continue each month through September where you can come out, enjoy some free food & music, plus connect with the Mayor, members of Council, and City Department Heads to learn more & ask any questions you have!



RESIDENT Q&A

Question: *How do residential rental units work in the City?*

Answer: All residential rental properties need to have a "Residential Rental License" and renew it each year. It covers everything from individual rooms in a house, to detached homes, to above/ below business residences, to hotels and apartment units. The license is part of ensuring that rental properties meet safety and maintenance standards, like adequate fire safety, appropriate heating/air conditioning, and related.

You can reach out to the Fire Marshal & Permit Services at 301-725-5300 for additional info.



Christine Johnson, Council Member, At-Large

- Elected to first term on Laurel City Council on November 7, 2023
- Resident of the City of Laurel since 2002
- B.S. Sociology - University of Maryland College Park
- 2nd Vice Chair, Woman's Club of Laurel

As we welcome May, our city is in full bloom. The weather is getting warmer, and there will be plenty of community events, outdoor activities, and new opportunities to connect. I'm excited to share updates on local projects, upcoming initiatives, and ways you can get involved in shaping our community.

Remember, your voice matters. I always appreciate hearing from you — whether it's a concern, an idea, or a success story. Your input guides decisions and ensures we're building a city that reflects the needs and values of everyone who calls it home. Let's continue working together to make our city vibrant, inclusive, and strong.

Wishing you a joyful and safe month ahead! [Click here to watch my latest interview on Laurel TV!](#)

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR BACKYARD!



- We've seen a recent rise in car break-ins across the city. Please remember to lock your vehicles, remove valuables, and avoid leaving items in plain sight. Park in well-lit areas when possible and report any suspicious activity. Staying alert and proactive can help keep our neighborhoods safe for everyone.
- May brings exciting events & milestones! As city pools open for the season, be sure to check schedules & safety rules. Congratulations to our graduates and their families! Check out Main Street Festival and LakeFest, both packed with fun, food, and music. Come out, celebrate, & enjoy everything our community has to offer!

RESIDENT Q&A

Question: Will the City continue to provide funding for the Laurel Independent newsletter?

Answer: As the city budget is currently under review, continued funding for the Laurel Independent newsletter is being carefully considered along with other community priorities. I recognize the value it brings in keeping residents informed and connected, and I'll advocate for a balanced budget that supports transparency, engagement, and local journalism.



Calling Aspiring Authors!

Are you the next literary sensation waiting to be discovered?

In extension to Mayor Keith Sydnor's literacy initiative

Submit your book idea for the chance to win an exclusive publishing contract with Quill and Company.

1

Submit your book pitch by May 21

2

Participate in the competition

3

Pitch your idea to a live audience

Must be available in the Laurel, MD area on the following dates:
May 24, June 7, June 14, June 21, June 28

APPLY TODAY AT [QUILLANDCOMPANY.COM](#)

Supporting A Local Business Haitian Flag Day, May 18th

This May, we wish to give a spotlight to different cultures here in Laurel. Haiti is the first Black nation to gain their independence on January 1st, 1804.

Prior to their independence, on May 18th, 1803, the enslaved Haitians took the French flag, ripped out the middle, and, under the guidance of the legendary Haitian leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Catherine Flon knitted the blue and red together, thus giving birth to the flag that is known today. Up until 1986, there have been various versions of the Haitian flag that have been used; however, the symbolic palm trees and coat of arms with the motto of the island, "L'union Fait La Force" (Unity means Strength), have always been involved.

Haitian Flag Day has been celebrated in the culture of Haiti for 222 years, where they celebrate their independence and honor the hard work of their ancestors with dance and delicious food, ranging from fried plantain, goat, black rice, brown rice, and many more options to choose from.

CHEZ YIAMME'S
CATERING & FUNCTIONS



To join the celebration of 222 years of Haitian Flag Day, Chez Yammie Catering and Functions, located at 347 Main St., Laurel, Maryland will be hosting a pop-up brunch on May 18th @ 12noon-4pm.

JOB FAIR 2025

MONDAY, JUNE 9TH ★ 10:00AM - 2:00PM

Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center
204 Fort Meade Road, Laurel, Maryland 20707



Scan this QR code to register for the job fair

- Free Resume Assistance
- Free Professional Headshots
- Free Resources to enhance employment opportunities

If you are an interested employer please scan the QR Code to register, or email Raymond Newby at Raymond.Newby@maryland.gov

