

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF LAUREL

December 22, 2025

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Laurel, Montana, was held in the Council Chambers and called to order by Mayor Dave Waggoner at 6:30 p.m. on December 22, 2025.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Thomas Canape	Heidi Sparks
Michelle Mize	
Casey Wheeler	Irv Wilke
Richard Klose	Jodi Mackay

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jessica Banks

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:

Brittney Harakal, Administrative Assistant
Kurt Markegard, CAO
Susan Canape, Dispatcher
JW Hopper, Fire Chief
Sara Naylor, Council Member Elect
Brent Edgmond, Council Member Elect
KC Bieber, Firefighter
Forrest Sanderson, LURA Coordinator
Jason Gonzales, Building Official

Mayor Waggoner led the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

MINUTES:

Motion by Council Member Wilke to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 9, 2025, as presented, seconded by Council Member Mize. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All seven Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 7-0.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Fire Monthly Report - November 2025
- Sparks' Resignation Letter from Beartooth RC&D.

COUNCIL DISCLOSURE OF EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS: None.

PUBLIC HEARING: None.

CONSENT ITEMS:

- **Claims entered through December 19, 2025.**
A complete listing of the claims and their amounts is on file in the Clerk/Treasurer's Office.
- **Approval of Payroll Register for PPE 12/05/2025 totaling \$309,075.15.**
- **Council Workshop Minutes of December 2, 2025.**
- **Council Workshop Minutes of December 16, 2025.**

The Mayor asked if there was any separation of consent items. There was none.

Motion by Council Member Klose to approve the consent items as presented, seconded by Council Member Canape. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All seven Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 7-0.

CEREMONIAL CALENDAR:

- Swearing in of newly Elected Officials.

DP

Judge He Does It swore in all the newly elected Council Members who take office in January.

- Arbor Day Proclamation 2026.

Mayor Waggoner read the 2026 Arbor Day Proclamation, proclaiming October 6, 2026, as Arbor Day.

REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

- Budget/Finance Committee Minutes of December 9, 2025.
- Tree/Park Board Minutes of December 4, 2025.
- Laurel Urban Renewal Agency Minutes of December 8, 2025.
- Public Works Committee Minutes of November 17, 2025.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (THREE-MINUTE LIMIT): None.

SCHEDULED MATTERS:

- **Appointment of Peggy Pollock to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency for a four-year term ending December 31, 2029.**

Motion by Council Member Mize to approve the Mayor's appointment of Peggy Pollock to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency for a four-year term ending December 31, 2029, seconded by Council Member Wilke. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All seven Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 7-0.

- **Appointment of Cheryl Hill to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency - Advisory of a four-year term ending December 31, 2029.**

Motion by Council Member Sparks to approve the Mayor's appointment of Cheryl Hill to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency – Advisory for a four-year term ending December 31, 2029, seconded by Council Member Wilke.

Council was reminded that, due to changes in state statutes, it is required to appoint Peggy to the voting member position and Cheryl to the advisory roll. After the ordinance is changed, Cheryl would like to server again as a voting member.

Cheryl Hill noted that she is excited to move this project forward.

There was no Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All seven Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 7-0.

- **Ordinance No. O25-02: An Ordinance Amending Title 20, Chapter 02 Of The Laurel Municipal Code Related To The Laurel Urban Renewal Agency. (Second Reading)**

Motion by Council Member Mackay to adopt Ordinance No. O25-02, seconded by Council Member Wilke. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A roll call vote was taken on the motion. Council Members Sparks, Wilke, Mackay, Klose, Wheeler, Mize, and Canape voted aye. Motion carried 7-0.

- **Resolution No. R25-103: A Resolution Of The City Council Approving The Variance Requested By Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores To Allow Signage Exceeding The Maximum Signage Limit For On-Premises Signage In The Laurel Highway Commercial (HC) Zoning District.**

Motion by Council Member Canape to approve Resolution No. R25-103, seconded by Council Member Wilke. There was no public comment.

Council asked for clarification on this resolution as it had not been discussed at the Workshop. It was clarified (see Staff report) that the variance that came before Council should also have included the square-foot coverage. The new zoning code has errors that need to be fixed and has not been codified. The new code indicated 300 square feet, whereas the old code used the linear feet of the property frontage to determine the maximum square footage of signage allowed.

7-0. A vote was taken on the motion. All seven Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried

ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA: None.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS (ONE-MINUTE LIMIT):

Council and Staff thanked both Council Member Sparks and Mize for their service on Council.

Council wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION: None.

MAYOR UPDATES:

Mayor Waggoner read the attached holiday statement.

UNSCHEDULED MATTERS: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Council Member Sparks to adjourn the Council meeting, seconded by Council Member Mize. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All seven Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 7-0.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.


Britney Harakal, Administrative Assistant


Dave Waggoner, Mayor

Approved by the Mayor and passed by the City Council of the City of Laurel, Montana, this 13th day of January 2025.

Attest:


Kelly Strecker, Clerk/Treasurer





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City Of Laurel

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Office of the City Planner

VARIANCE REPORT VAR-25-03 **Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores** **Maximum Outdoor Advertising** **December 19, 2025**

BACKGROUND:

The City of Laurel has had zoning since the early 1970's as authorized by §76-2-301 et. seq MCA. These regulations set minimum and maximum standards for all lands located with the jurisdiction of the City of Laurel. These regulations establish standards for the height, bulk, and location of structures (including outdoor advertising signs).

The subject property was recently annexed into the City of Laurel and was assigned the initial zoning of Highway Commercial (HC). The HC District imposes a maximum signage allowance that were intended to mirror the maximum allocations under the prior zoning regulations via an easier to interpret and apply standard.

The owner submitted a comprehensive sign package that was believed to comply with the prevailing zoning regulations. Unfortunately, the submittal used the prior regulations formula rather than what is currently adopted. The difference between the two methodologies is 408.53 square feet. The advertising analysis done by the Building Inspector is attached to and incorporated into this report by reference.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Westbrook Subdivision, Lot 7A1, Amended Tract 6A and 7A and a portion of Tract 5 less Highway right-of-way in Section 17, Township 02 South, Range 24 East, P.M.M., City of Laurel, Yellowstone County, Montana.

APPLICANT(S):

Love's Travel Stops & Community Stores, Corporate Office
10601 N Pennsylvania Ave
Oklahoma City, OK 73120

AGENT:

Effective Images, Inc
Kevin Keup
1027 5th Ave NW
Watertown, SD 57201

EXISTING CONDITION:

The subject property is a platted subdivision within the City of Laurel. The property is undeveloped and is intended to be served by public water, sewer, streets, and solid waste collection. The property is 34.239 acres in size.

PROCESS:

- The application for a Variance was submitted on November 25, 2025, and is scheduled for a public hearing on December 18, 2025 by the Laurel Zoning Commission.
- The Zoning Commission following the Public Hearing must adopt findings of fact and issue a formal recommendation to the City Council on the requested variance. The Zoning Commission may propose conditions or modifications to the request so long as the findings of fact support the condition(s).
- Those findings of fact and conclusions as well as the record minutes of the public hearing will be submitted to the City Council for consideration, hearing and final decision.
- The City Council will consider the Zoning Commission's Recommendation to approve the variance on December 22, 2025.

ZONES INVOLVED: Existing and Proposed

- HC – Highway Commercial District.
 - The maximum on premise advertising to exceed maximum by 408.53 square feet.

RATIONAL BASIS FOR VARIANCE:

“Variance” means an adjustment in the application of the specific regulations of this title to a particular piece of property which property, because of special circumstances applicable to it, is deprived of privileges commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same vicinity or zone.

Findings of Fact: Standard of Review

A recommendation for Approval or Conditional Approval of a Variance shall require the Board of Adjustment making each of the following Findings of Fact:

1. Special Conditions

There are special circumstances or conditions that are peculiar to the land or building for which the Variance is sought that do not apply generally to land or buildings in the neighborhood; and

2. Not Result of Applicant

The special circumstances or conditions have not resulted from an act of the applicant or been established to circumvent this Ordinance; and

3. Strict Application Unreasonable

Due to the special circumstances or conditions, the strict application of this Ordinance would deprive the applicant of reasonable use of the land or building or create an undue hardship on the landowner; and

4. Necessary to Provide Reasonable Use

Granting the Variance is necessary to provide a reasonable use of the land or building; and

5. Minimum Variance

The Variance is the minimum variance necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land or building; and

6. Not Injurious

Granting the Variance will not be injurious to the neighborhood or detrimental to the public welfare; and

7. Consistent with Ordinance

Granting the Variance is consistent with the purposes and intent of this Ordinance. A variance to the Allowed Uses of a zoning district is prohibited.

CONDITIONS

Conditions or restrictions may be placed on the approval of a Variance.

EXPIRATION

A Variance shall expire one (1) year from the date of approval if the next logical step in the development process is not commenced. The next step in the development process includes but is not limited to applying for a building permit, commencing the use, or applying for a Development Permit.

Findings of Fact:

RECOMMENDATION:

The Zoning Commission (on a 6-0 Vote) recommends that the City Council **APPROVE** the variance request to exceed the maximum outdoor signage in the Highway Commercial Zone for the Love's Travel Stops & Community Stores as presented in the sign permit application.