

**Town of Montreat
Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting
June 5, 2014 – 5:30 p.m.
Walkup Building**

Commissioners present: Mayor Letta Jean Taylor
Commissioner Martha Campbell
Commissioner Tim Helms
Commissioner Jack McCaskill
Commissioner Ann Vinson

Commissioners absent: Mayor Pro Tem Mary Standaert

Town staff present: Ron Nalley, Town Administrator
Misty R. Gedlinske, Town Clerk
Steve Freeman, Public Works Director
Jack Staggs, Chief of Police
Stefan Stackhouse, Finance Officer
David Currie, Building Inspector/Code Administrator

Approximately 50 members of the public were also present. Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. and held a moment of silence.

Agenda Approval

Commissioner Vinson moved to adopt the meeting agenda as presented. Commissioner Campbell seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

Town Hall Facility Preliminary Architectural Design Plan Discussion

Architectural Design Studios (ADS) representatives Mike Cox and Amy Dowty presented preliminary conceptual design information for the new Town Hall facility. The presentation was divided into three sections, each followed by a public comment period on the information presented in that section.

Ms. Dowty began the presentation by reviewing the following topics:

- An introduction to the design process and a timeline of future project steps;
- An overview of the Town government's daily operations and provided services;
- A description of the current Town Services Office limitations and inadequacies;
- A listing of the goals and objectives to be achieved through the programming and design process;
- A graphic depiction of the location and topography of the Florida Terrace lots, including proposed strategies for reducing site disturbance, managing stormwater runoff, preserving existing vegetation, and maintain a perimeter buffer while still providing a fully ADA-compliant facility.

Ms. Dowty then asked for public comments on this section.

Mr. John Craven asked whether there would be any discussion of the site selection process for the new Town Hall facility, and whether the Board had considered lots owned by the Mountain Retreat Association located just outside the Montreat Gate. Ms. Dowty and Mr. Cox replied that Architectural Design Studios had only been contracted to develop an architectural design plan for the Florida Terrace property. Mayor Taylor and Mr. Nalley stated that the lots outside the Montreat Gate were among more than 20 potential sites the Board had discussed during their research and consideration of this project. Ms. Jane Holt requested an opportunity for the public to hear more information about how the Florida Terrace site had been selected. Mr. Nalley stated that the purpose of this meeting was to review and discuss preliminary design plans for the Florida Terrace lot, and offered to repeat his previous presentation on the Town Hall replacement project at either the end of this meeting or during the Board's Agenda Meeting later this evening.

The second portion of the presentation included a program of spaces review for Town Administration, Police, Public Works, and public meeting areas, including potential benefits and disadvantages of continuing all Public Works operations in the current Town Services Office. Based on meetings with Town department heads and input from individual Board members, it is proposed at this time that dedicated office and meeting space for the Public Works Department will not be included in the new Town Hall facility. All daily Public Works operations are proposed at this time to remain at the current Town Services Office, along with all departmental vehicle, equipment and supply storage.

Ms. Dowty then asked for public comments on this section.

Mr. John Johnson asked whether ADS staff or the Board has considered the use of geothermal heating and cooling systems for the new building. Mr. Cox responded that this possibility would be examined and possible pursued if site conditions and budgetary constraints allowed. Mrs. Shannon Ingersoll had questions about how long it could take the Town to recoup the installation costs of a geothermal system through reduced energy costs. Mr. Cox said this time period would depend on a number of variables and would be part of their research.

The third portion of the presentation focused on placement of the building on the site, and organization of the interior spaces. Ms. Dowty began with a brief overview of the two conceptual options provided in McGill Associates' September 2013 feasibility study. Both options suggested a total building area of approximately 8,900 square feet, and a building footprint of 5,500 square feet. Ms. Dowty then presented two possible variations of a three-story conceptual building layout, which proposed a total building area of 7,800 square feet, with a building footprint of between 3,100 and 3,300 square feet, depending on whether the administrative offices were located on the first or second floor. In both variations, the Police Department was located on the third floor, with a separate entrance and dedicated parking area accessed from Arkansas Trail. The main building entrance and parking spaces for administrative staff and visitors are accessed

from Florida Terrace. The three-story conceptual plans reduced the total building area by 12% from the McGill Associates study, and reduced the building footprint size by 40%.

A two-story concept was also presented, which located the Police Department on the ground floor, with administrative offices and public meeting spaces on the upper floor. This option eliminated the separate Police Department entrance on Arkansas Trail, and moved all parking spaces to the Florida Terrace side of the property. Although the proposed total building area would be reduced to 7,700 square feet and the upper portion of the lot would remain undisturbed, the building footprint would increase to 4,600 square feet and would require more site disturbance and greater stormwater control measures. The building would also be less residential in scale than in the three-story models. Ms. Dowty explained that, due to limited lot width, locating the administrative offices and public meeting spaces on the first floor with provisions for windows and entry-level parking would likely not be feasible.

In all scenarios, the square footage of the proposed Council chambers was nearly identical to the size of the current meeting room size in the Walkup Building, and would provide seating for approximately 40 members of the public. The project size, site impact, and stormwater runoff were also reduced from the original feasibility study, while the amount of on-site parking was increased. The gross square footage calculation, which includes the space needed for bathrooms, closets and interior wall dimensions, was also decreased from 32% to approximately 28%.

During public comment on the third portion of the presentation, Ms. Dowty confirmed the location of the property's lot lines and building setbacks as indicated in the presentation materials. Considerable discussion was heard concerning the number of proposed parking spaces to be provided. Although Montreat's Zoning Ordinance requires eight parking spaces for a building of this square footage, 25 parking spaces are proposed to accommodate Administrative staff, Police Department officers and visitors, and public parking for daily business and typical Board and committee meetings. An informal poll of members of the Board, Town staff and public present who drove separate vehicles to this meeting indicated that the proposed parking area would accommodate all but five of those cars. Mayor Taylor noted that most typical Town Council meetings were attended by less than 10 members of the public. Mr. Nalley advised that, if needed, overflow parking would be available in the public spaces on Appalachian Way or in shared parking lots on Montreat College's campus. He also noted that Conference Center facilities will still be reserved when exceptionally large meetings are anticipated. Pervious paving surfaces will be considered for the proposed parking areas, subject to feasibility and budgetary constraints.

Comments were then heard about the size and layout of the proposed facility. Two members of the public expressed a preference to locate the administrative offices on the ground floor due to the amount of daily visitors, with public meeting spaces on the second floor. Ms. Dowty also confirmed that the meeting rooms in the new facility could be organized as multi-use spaces with acoustical partitions, if desired. In response to a question about the irregular shapes shown in the programming diagram, Ms. Dowty explained that these images were only conceptual designs to

determine space needs and preliminary building layouts, and were not intended as floor plans. Mr. Cox advised that incorporation of design features and characteristics common to other homes and structures within Montreat would be a topic for future schematic design discussions.

Mr. Sonnenberg asked whether an analysis of Town Hall facilities in other municipalities with similar populations had been done to compare those findings with the building size proposed in the conceptual plans. Ms. Dowty said that ADS staff had specifically researched similarly-sized police departments in other municipalities, and had determined that other facilities were generally larger than what was proposed for Montreat. Mr. Sonnenberg also noted that the space allocated for the Police Department was substantially larger than the size of the proposed Council chambers even though officers would spend a limited amount of time in the building. Ms. Dowty explained that the majority of space in the Police Department was devoted to providing secure areas for evidence processing, as well as secure storage for equipment, weapons and ammunition.

Discussion was also heard about the potential cost differential between a two-story and three-story facility. Ms. Dowty said that due to the greater amount of excavation and retaining walls needed for a two-story structure, the square footage cost of a three-story structure would likely be only nominally higher. Mr. Cox said that a three-story Town Hall of the proposed size would more closely resemble a large residential structure such as Sylvan Heights, a lodge located next door to the site, while a two-story building would have a larger footprint and appear more institutional. Recessing the ground floor into the hillside will mitigate the height of the upper floors and prevent the building from appearing as tall, particularly when viewed from Arkansas Trail. Construction costs for the facility are currently estimated at \$180 per square foot, although these figures may be subject to change as the design process moves forward.

At Mayor Taylor's request, Mr. Nalley then repeated his presentation from the May 8, 2014 Town Council Meeting on the Town Hall replacement project, which included the following information:

- a brief description of the age, ownership status and condition of the current Town Services Office and the Mountain Retreat Association's Maintenance Shop facility next door;
- the reasons a new facility is needed, including a lack of proper heating, air conditioning and electrical systems, inadequate office, meeting and storage space, restrooms, and safety features, inefficient design, lack of ADA compliance, and increased staffing levels since the 1980s;
- a timeline of the Board's consideration of this topic and official actions taken since 2005, including how long the project has been included in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan and ways in which information concerning the project have been communicated to the public during that time period;
- maps of the 21 potential locations considered for constructing a new Town Hall or renovating an existing structure for this purpose;

- a summary of the advantages and disadvantages for each potential site;
- a statement of the factors influencing the Board’s final site selection choice, and a clarification that the chosen property was listed and purchased in cash on the open real estate market and not through a privately negotiated arrangement;
- a description of the parcel’s pre-existing Institutional/Residential Zoning District designation and the permitted or conditional uses currently allowed on the site;
- a clarification that the space needs and site assessment studies performed prior to the purchase of the Florida Terrace lots were intended to determine the maximum building square footage needed to accommodate current and future needs, and to confirm that a structure of that size could be sited on the subject property;
- estimated project costs, including the space needs and site assessment studies, land acquisition, construction, design, engineering, and financing expenses;
- a statement of the Town’s legal debt margin, Fund Balance amount and lack of any General Fund debt;
- a proposed schedule of next project steps, including public input sessions, design development, bid solicitation, contract awards and an estimated project completion date.

Following this presentation, there was brief public comment concerning financing arrangements for this project. Mr. Nalley stated that the Town had acquired the Florida Terrace lot through a cash purchase, and was in preliminary conversations with the Local Government Commission to determine the best long-term financing options to fund the construction of the new Town Hall facility.

Adjournment

Mayor Taylor declared the meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Letta Jean Taylor, Mayor

Misty R. Gedlinske, Town Clerk