

**Town of Montreat
Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting
June 19, 2014
Walkup Building**

Commissioners present: Mayor Letta Jean Taylor
Mayor Pro Tem Mary Standaert
Commissioner Martha Campbell
Commissioner Jack McCaskill
Commissioner Ann Vinson

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Tim Helms

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

Approximately 70 members of the public were also present. Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m., led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and gave the invocation.

Agenda Approval

Commissioner Campbell moved to adopt the meeting agenda as presented. Commissioner Vinson seconded and the motion carried 4/0.

Town Hall Project Background Presentation

Mr. Nalley gave an updated presentation on the Town Hall 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 list of which services will be relocated to the new facility, and which will remain at the current Town Services Office location;

- 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, the number of times this topic has been discussed in official Board meetings, 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 description of the factors influencing the Board’s final site selection choice, including a desire for an independent facility and a determination that the Town Hall should be located within Montreat’s municipal limits;
- A statement of the property’s total purchase price and square footage costs, with the average 2010 Montreat lot square footage price provided for comparison;
- 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;
- an explanation 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;
- a summary of the programming and space needs study results;
- the date of the Board’s selection of an architectural design firm and approved contract amount;
- an overview of Architectural Design Services’ efforts to date;
- a review of 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;
- brief responses to some recently expressed public concerns, including lot steepness, zoning, tax base impact, public safety, traffic volume, and parking;
- a list of sources for project updates and other Town-related information.

During discussion, there were questions from the public concerning whether Police Department staff had been consulted during the conceptual design development process, and whether the proposed facility met departmental needs. Chief Staggs confirmed that he and other Montreat officers had participated in both the space needs analysis and development of the current conceptual designs. He believed that the new facility would provide adequate and secure weapons, ammunition and evidence storage, would comply with applicable state and Federal guidelines, and would provide room for future expansion if necessary. He pointed out the new Town Hall location would be more centrally located to the majority of the department's activity, as approximately 85% of the department's call responses took place north of the Louisiana Road intersection. He said that officers actively patrolled all parts of Montreat during their shifts, rather than limiting themselves to stationary monitoring at the Montreat Gate. He also reiterated that, unrelated to the Town Hall project, the department had made changes to shift schedules and patrol car parking procedures over the past two years to make it more difficult for the public to determine which officer was on duty, or predict which area he or she was patrolling at a given time.

A member of the public said he could not understand why the new Town Hall facility must be within Montreat's municipal limits when the current Town Services Office has been located outside the Gate for so many years, and noted that a number of the potential sites included in Mr. Nalley's presentation were located outside the Town limits. Mr. Nalley said that he was unaware of any other municipality with a Town Hall outside the municipal limits, and that while Montreat is unique on many ways, he could not see any benefit to locating the new Town Hall outside Montreat.

Mayor Pro Tem Standaert said that her first term in office coincided with the Board's consideration of purchasing the 80-acre Horton family property located outside the Gate in Buncombe County. She said the Board had considered using this property for ridge protection and land conservation as well as a Town Hall site, and would likely have taken action to annex the property if the purchase had moved forward. She said that throughout her consideration of this issue over the years, it had become increasingly important to her that the Town Hall be a part of the community it serves. She said she believed that the public would be better protected by a police department headquartered closer to the Town's center, rather than on its outskirts. She also felt that locating the Town Hall outside the municipal limits could make resolving the current voter registration and polling place address inaccuracies in the Buncombe County Board of Elections database more difficult.

Commissioner Vinson said that while she was not a Council member when the Board voted to purchase the Florida Terrace lots as a Town Hall site, she supported their decision. She felt that in addition to police protection issues, the new location would be closer to the majority of homes in Montreat. She also wanted to keep Montreat tax dollars within Montreat, rather than having to pay building permit and inspection fees, water bills and police protection costs to the Town of

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Black Mountain for a Town Hall facility located within their jurisdiction. Commissioner McCaskill agreed, stating that Montreat was an incorporated township separate from the Town of Black Mountain and, as such, should have its own independent municipal facilities. He also noted that the current Town Services Office was located within Buncombe County, not the Town of Black Mountain.

When asked why the Town would want to leave any of their facilities outside the Montreat Gate, Mr. Nalley explained that the Board decided to leave the garbage compactors, recycling containers, heavy equipment, and tool and supply storage areas at the current location to reduce building size, site disturbance, vehicular traffic and noise on Florida Terrace. He noted that it is common practice in other municipalities to separate Public Works facilities from other municipal offices due to the nature of their operations.

Commissioner Campbell said she looked forward to an independent Town Hall facility that will be attractive and used by the community for many purposes, and where the work of the Town could be done effectively and efficiently.

Mrs. Grace Nichols said that her husband, former Commissioner Eric Nichols, regretted being unable to attend tonight's meeting due to scheduling conflicts. She was glad to see that the community has recognized a need for a new Town Hall facility. She thanked the Board members for their efforts and their dedication to serving Montreat's citizens. She said that the Board members carefully consider all Town business matters and listen to all input received from the public. She also said she did not understand or agree with recent claims of a lack of communication from the Board, as most Town Council meetings over the past few years have been poorly attended by the public. She encouraged all residents and tax payers to contact the Board members and visit the Town's website to stay informed about all government proceedings.

Dr. Ruth Currie said that during her ten years of service as a Town Commissioner, the Board had thoroughly discussed and researched potential sites for the new Town Hall facility. She spoke in favor of the Florida Terrace site, stating it was the best decision that the Board could make from among the available options. She agreed that it was important to locate the Police Department closer to the Town center area in the interest of public safety. She pointed out that Montreat had been an incorporated town since 1967, and felt strongly that the new Town Hall should be located within the Town's municipal limits. She praised the current Board members for their efforts and asked the public for their support.

Mr. Tom Lentz also thanked the Board and Town staff for their service. He agreed that a new Town Hall was needed but was not convinced that Florida Terrace was the best location. He felt that much of the public attention to this project originated from concerns about its potential effect on property taxes. He suggested that the Town may want to consider purchasing one of Montreat College's facilities as an alternative solution.

Mr. Ted Carey asked whether there was any documentation of the Board's consideration of each of the potential Town Hall sites included in Mr. Nalley's presentation, including the reasons why certain sites were disqualified as viable options. Mr. Nalley explained that consideration of a number of sites never progressed beyond identification and initial staff research. He said that while a master list of advantages and disadvantages for all the potential sites had not been compiled, it would be possible to do so if necessary. A staff memo from 2007 ranking certain initial sites will be posted to the Town's website, and members of the public are welcome to meet with Mr. Nalley to discuss specific sites in more detail.

Mr. Nalley also noted that during its previous investigation of the suggested alternative location lots outside Montreat Gate, the Town had discovered that over one-third of the lot is located within the flood plain. There is also an MSD sewer easement running through the property that cannot be built upon, in addition to the limitations on developable area created by setback requirements along Montreat Road. The Board had hoped to address some of these challenges by combining these lots with an adjoining property, but staff later discovered that the adjoining property was not available for purchase.

New Town Hall Facility Design Development Presentation and Discussion

Architectural Design Studios representative Amy Dowty explained that the goal of her firm's work was to design a new Town Hall facility that welcomed public interaction and participation in daily governmental affairs, provided an appropriate workplace for Town employees, fit into the selected site, and was respectful of the surrounding community character. She described the programming needs identified for the building, the location and zoning designation of Florida Terrace lots, the number of staff members who will have office spaces inside the building, and the average number of daily visitors. She reviewed the overall site planning strategies and goals and noted the reduction in the proposed facility's overall square footage, building footprint, site impact, and stormwater runoff as compared with the options presented in the project's initial feasibility study.

There were questions from the public concerning the difference between the number of parking spaces required by the Town's Zoning Ordinance and the number of spaces proposed in the conceptual design plans. Ms. Dowty explained that although only eight spaces are required for a building of this size, a total of 25 spaces are proposed to provide adequate staff and visitor parking for most Council meetings and other functions. Montreat Conference Center facilities would still be reserved for very large meetings or events. Some members of the public felt that the amount of proposed parking spaces was excessive and should be reduced, while others felt the number of parking spaces should remain unchanged.

In response to a question about the purpose of the separate building entrance and small parking area on Arkansas Trail, Chief Staggs explained that this would be used as dedicated parking and building access for the Police Department. Anyone wishing to meet discreetly with Police Department staff would be able to arrange to do so without having to enter the building through the main lobby. Officers would also be able to interview or escort suspects to and from the building directly, without having to access or travel through other departments. The separate building entrance would also provide officers with quick and direct access to their vehicles for emergency response purposes.

Other comments included questions about the comparative sizes of the current Town Services Office and the new facility. The Town Services Office is approximately 1,300 square feet in size. The proposed square footage of the new Town Hall is approximately 7,800 square feet, which includes full Police Department facilities and integrated Council chambers. Some in the audience felt that this was excessive, particularly since the Town intended to retain use of the current Town Services Office for Public Works Department use. More information about any necessary or recommended roadway widening on Florida Terrace will be available after civil engineering studies are done.

Ms. Dowty then presented and reviewed the proposed first floor conceptual layout.

There were questions from the public concerning the anticipated use of the proposed 40-seat Council chambers. Ms. Dowty stated that the room was intended for use by all of the Town's elected and advisory boards, and could be made available to other community groups at the Board's discretion. Television screens and an integrated sound system, which could include assisted listening devices, may be provided to ensure that even larger audiences can view and hear the proceedings. These items could be installed separately at a later time depending on budgetary constraints. The recommended finished ceiling height of the proposed Council chambers is between 12 and 13 feet to further enhance the room's acoustics. The smaller conference room can be used for Closed Sessions, smaller boards or groups, or as a space for Council members to meet individually with members of the public. Mr. Ted Carey asked whether Council chambers were included in the proposed design plans at the Board's request or as a recommendation from the architects. Mr. Nalley stated that the Board expressed a desire for their own dedicated meeting space. The Town currently rents meeting space from the Montreat Conference Center, and despite good cooperation between the entities there are sometimes availability conflicts between Conference Center activities and meeting schedules for the Town's various boards and committees.

Discussion was also heard concerning the proposed bathroom facilities. Three separate bathrooms are proposed on the first floor, one each for men, women and a family bathroom that can accommodate parents with small children or other individuals needing additional assistance. Ms. Dowty explained that smaller, individual facilities were more cost effective and

offered greater privacy than large, multi-stall bathrooms. Two bathrooms are proposed for the second floor, and only one on the third floor in addition to the shower facilities in the Police Department.

Mr. Rusty Frank suggested incorporating space for a commissioned work of public art on the outdoor terrace adjoining the Council Chambers. Another member of the public requested a second means of access between the Council chambers and the outdoor terrace. Ms. Dowty said this could be achieved by relocating the terrace from the side to the front of the building. She also said that while outdoor features such as benches and patios can be installed separately, any necessary grading for these items should be done at the same time as site preparation for the main building structure. Mr. Cox explained that during the construction bidding phase of the project, the bid advertisements will include both base bids for key elements and several add-on options that the Board can choose to include depending on cost and other factors.

Mr. Michael Sonnenberg observed that approximately one-third of the proposed Town Hall's square footage was devoted to the Council chambers and asked if this correlated to one-third of the building's total cost. Ms. Dowty said that a per-floor cost analysis could be developed to provide this information at the Board's request.

Ms. Dowty then presented and reviewed the proposed second story conceptual layout. She used a scale comparison model to indicate that the square footage of this floor was approximately 2.5 times larger than the current Town Services Office. She noted that there would be signage in the first floor lobby area to welcome visitors and direct them to the office areas on the upper floor. The proposed entry area includes a two-story glass atrium so that visitors have a sense of activity upstairs, and also to help make Town staff aware that someone has entered the building. Mr. Steve Sewell asked if the Board had considered placing a staff member on the first floor to greet visitors. Ms. Dowty explained that the Town did not employ a receptionist, and that any employee stationed on the first floor would be working alone, disconnected from other staff members.

During discussion, Ms. Dowty reviewed the proposed office square footage for the various administrative staff members, which she explained was needed to adequately accommodate each position's basic job functions and allow handicapped accessibility. In response to Commissioner McCaskill's questions about the size of the proposed work room space, Ms. Dowty pointed out that this room would also include a computer desk and workspace for the Public Works Director.

Ms. Dowty then presented and reviewed the proposed third story Police Department conceptual layout. She answered questions from the public concerning the purpose of the third floor deck area, the locations of the roof lines as depicted in the design presentation, and

square footage comparisons between the second and third floors. There was discussion and comments from the public about the room sizes and anticipated uses of the patrol room, evidence room, and ammunition and equipment storage areas. Commissioner McCaskill reiterated that nearly all of spaces proposed for the Police Department are new accommodations that do not exist in the current Town Services Office. When asked if comparison data from other municipalities was incorporated into the proposed Police Department's design, Ms. Dowty said that while the conceptual layout was similar to another facility she had worked with in Connecticut, the design was primarily based on space needs input from Montreat officers. Chief Staggs stated that the proposed design would allow compliance with all applicable state and Federal requirements, and was adaptable to long-term departmental needs in the future.

Ms. Dowty then reviewed how slope issues would be addressed by recessing the rear of the building into the hillside, while still providing a grade level exit for each floor.

During discussion, Mr. Ashton Phelps expressed concerns about the potential for mold in a building recessed into a slope and asked whether ADS would accept any professional legal liability for any mold issues that arise in the future. Mr. Cox and Ms. Dowty explained that mold would be prevented through proper drainage design, HVAC system installation and architectural oversight, and that their firm accepted responsibility for this issue.

Rev. Ann Jones expressed concerns about the size, carbon footprint, and neighborhood impact of the proposed building, the number of suggested parking spaces, and the noise generated by the HVAC system. Ms. Dowty said that one of her firm's goals was to develop a design that was as sensitive and respectful to the surrounding neighborhood as possible. She pointed out that the subject lots were large enough to accommodate two or three sized single-family residences, and that the building foot print, roof area and stormwater runoff of such development would be greater than the proposed Town Hall facility.

There were also questions from the public about the height and location of any necessary retaining walls, and the anticipated height of the building's roofline. Ms. Dowty stated that a 16' retaining wall would be needed at the back of the building's first floor, as well as an additional wall behind the parking lot. She also said that the building's roofline would be less than 40 feet high from the average grade of the lot, and would be slightly shorter than that of the Sylvan Heights lodge located next door to the site. Dr. Ann Jones commented that she would prefer a series of smaller retaining walls with vegetative plantings rather than the greater visual impact of a single large structure.

Ms. Dowty then reviewed the proposed site plan, including the location of property and setback lines, existing trees to be retained and new trees and other vegetation to be replanted after

construction, building footprint size, stormwater control options, and the number and location of proposed parking spaces.

During public comment, she advised that, depending on the results of upcoming engineering studies, a permeable pavement surface may be available that will allow stormwater to pass through the surface but still be durable enough for snow plowing. She indicated in which direction the first or second floor of the building could be expanded, if desired. She also responded to a question about the safety of the selected site by stating that while site selection was the Board's decision, she did not perceive that the new Town Hall's chosen location created any negative impact on public safety.

There were questions from the public concerning the size and necessity of the proposed third-floor building access and the dedicated Police Department parking area on Arkansas Trail. Ms. Dowty explained that the length of the proposed walkway and bridge were necessary to comply with ADA handicap accessibility requirements. She also said that while current North Carolina Building Code allows a single means of egress per floor, such an arrangement was not ideal and would not be recommended. Dr. Ann Jones asked if it would be possible to eliminate the parking area and connecting walkway on Arkansas Trail and instead create a connecting exterior path from the third floor to the main parking area. Ms. Dowty confirmed that this was possible, but would require multiple flights of exterior stairs, making it more difficult for Police officers to have quick, direct access to their vehicles. Dr. Jones felt that eliminating the Arkansas Trail parking area and walkway should be explored as a means of reducing the project's neighborhood impact.

Mr. Steve Sewell asked about the cost and financing for the new facility and said he believed that much of the opposition to the project would be resolved if the Town could guarantee that property tax rates would not increase. Mr. Nalley said that while he could not predict the Board's future decisions, he was confident that the Town's anticipated debt service payments to finance the Town Hall project were manageable, and that lending terms were currently favorable for local governments. He stated that once certain ongoing capital projects such as the Texas Road bridge replacement are completed, these funds can be reallocated toward Town Hall debt service.

In response to a question from Mr. Gill Campbell, Ms. Dowty said that reclaimed "graywater" could easily be used for outdoor irrigation, but would require a dedicated plumbing system to be used for indoor uses such as toilet flushing.

Mr. Les McLean urged the Board to perform a traffic engineering study to determine the current and future vehicular and pedestrian traffic levels and address any related safety concerns. He also advocated performing geotechnical studies and a soil analysis to determine the presence of any large amounts of rock or other site challenges before beginning

construction to reduce the possibility of unexpected projects delays and additional expenses. He felt the Board may discover that another site may be comparatively less expensive or difficult to develop, and that all this information should be considered before a final decision is made.

Ms. Dowty said that ADS will soon request civil engineering studies and soil borings at various locations on the Florida Terrace site to gather more information about soil compaction and the presence of underground rock. No final architectural plans will be prepared until this information is provided. Rock removal clauses will be included in the grading contracts.

Mr. Sonnenberg asked for a show of hands from the Board and Town staff members present whether they had extensively toured the Florida Terrace site. All of the Board members and several staff members indicated that they had toured the site.

Mrs. Shannon Ingersoll asked if there would be opportunities throughout the design and construction phases to delay or defer the project if unexpected costs or circumstances arise. Mr. Cox and Ms. Dowty explained that each bid will be presented to the Board for consideration, and can be rejected and re-advertised if the proposed cost or terms are not acceptable. Cost estimates will be provided prior to bid advertisement, and each bid will have both basic and add-on components that the Board may choose to include if funding allows. Contracts will include contingency cost percentages to account for a limited amount of unforeseen expenses or cost overruns. Any change orders that arise during the process will also be presented for Board approval.

Mr. Tom Frist said that while he appreciated all the work the Board and Town staff had done, he felt that many Montreat community members did not support the Florida Terrace location. He said that a community group opposed to the Florida Terrace site would hold an open meeting on the following Saturday to present their alternative plan. He asked the Board members whether there was anything that would convince them to change their minds about the selected site, or if the comments expressed during tonight's meeting were a waste of time.

Commissioner McCaskill responded by saying that the Board had listened to all the information, opinions and concerns expressed during this and previous meetings. Mayor Taylor said that she and Mr. Nalley would represent the Board of Commissioners during the opposition group's Saturday meeting. Mr. Nalley advised that the Board could hold a special meeting to consider acceptance of the proposed interior design layouts at a later time. After brief discussion, Commissioner Campbell moved to add consideration of the proposed design interior design layouts to the June 26 Special Meeting agenda, and to reschedule that meeting for 3:00 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Standaert seconded and the motion carried 4/0. Town staff will announce the meeting's location as soon as final arrangements are made.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Mayor Taylor reviewed the following list of upcoming meeting dates and deadlines:

<u>Special Meeting: Proposed 2014-2015 Fiscal Year Budget Discussion:</u>	June 23, 2014, 2:00 p.m. Town Services Office
<u>Special Meeting: 2014-2015 Fiscal Year Budget Adoption, Property/Liability Insurance Policy Approval and Town Hall Interior Design Layout Acceptance:</u>	June 26, 2014, 3:00 p.m. Location TBA
<u>Agenda Items Due:</u>	June 27, 2014, 5:00 p.m. Town Services Office
<u>Agenda Packets Available:</u>	July 1, 2014 www.townofmontreat.org/TownGovernment.php or Town Services Office
<u>July Montreat Landcare Committee Meeting:</u>	July 2, 2014, 9:00 a.m. Outdoor Education Classroom
<u>July Agenda Meeting:</u>	July 3, 2014, 7:00 p.m. Walkup Building
<u>Town Services Office Closure:</u>	July 4, 2014 Independence Day Holiday *There will be no sanitation collection on this date
<u>Montreat Gait Run/Walk Event</u>	July 4, 2014, 7:00 a.m. Montreat Gate
<u>4th of July Parade:</u>	July 4, 2014, 10:30 a.m.
<u>Montreat Cottagers Association Meeting:</u>	July 5, 2014, 10:00 a.m. Convocation Hall
<u>July Town Council Meeting:</u>	July 10, 2014, 7:00 p.m. Walkup Building
<u>Audit Committee Meeting:</u>	July 16, 3:00 p.m., Town Services Office
<u>July Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting:</u>	July 17, 2014, 7:00 p.m. Walkup Building

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<u>Agenda Items Due:</u>	August 1, 2014, 5:00 p.m. Town Services Office
<u>Montreat Cottagers Association Annual Business Meeting:</u>	August 2, 2014, 10:00 a.m. Convocation Hall
<u>Public Information Session – “How to Protect Your Montreat Home”</u>	August 5, 2014, 10:30 a.m. Moore Center Meeting Room

Adjournment

There being no further items of business to discuss, Mayor Pro Tem Standaert moved to adjourn the Special Meeting. Commissioner Vinson seconded. The motion carried 4/0 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Letta Jean Taylor, Mayor

Misty R. Gedlinske, Town Clerk