

**Town of Montreat  
Board of Commissioners  
Special Meeting  
June 26, 2014  
Kirk Allen Building**

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

Town staff present: Ron Nalley, Town Administrator  
Stefan Stackhouse, Finance Officer

Approximately 50 members of the public were also present. Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m., led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and gave the invocation.

**Agenda Approval**

Mayor Pro Tem Standaert moved to adopt the proposed meeting agenda as presented. Commissioner Vinson seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Public Comment**

Mrs. Mary Nell Todd of 153 Eastminster Terrace expressed her appreciation for the Assembly Drive greenway, pedestrian bridge and bicycle lane. She said that these projects, although originally controversial, were now attractive and beneficial additions to the community. She thanked the Board and staff for their diligence and good governance.

**Old Business**

- A. 2014-2015 Fiscal Year Budget Ordinance and Fee Schedule Adoption: Mr. Nalley pointed out that the proposed Budget Ordinance includes no changes to the Town's ad valorem property tax or water billing rates. Since the proposed Budget's initial presentation on June 12, the Board has decided to remove the \$40,000 allocated toward a stormwater utility study so as to reduce the total amount of Fund Balance appropriation needed to balance the Budget. Mayor Pro Tem Standaert then moved to adopt the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year Budget Ordinance and Fee Schedule as presented. Commissioner Vinson seconded.

The Board then reviewed the slight reduction in ad valorem property tax revenues expected due to tax rate appeals to Buncombe County made by individual property owners, as well as the cost savings to the Town from lowered premiums for property and liability insurance and employee health benefits. Commissioner Campbell expressed concerns that adequate funding be allocated for public communication efforts, and Mayor Pro Tem Standaert

reiterated her desire to encourage community non-profit entities to consider making payments to the Town in lieu of property taxes. After further brief discussion, the motion to adopt the Budget Ordinance and Fee Schedule carried 5/0. A copy of the Budget Ordinance and Fee Schedule are attached to these minutes and incorporated herein by reference.

**New Business**

- A. 2013-2014 Fiscal Year Budget Amendment #11: Mr. Stackhouse explained that this budget amendment was made necessary due to higher than expected costs to upgrade the Town's payroll software module, which limited the amount of funds available for the Microsoft 365 e-mail system conversion. Both of these projects were goals established by the Board for the current fiscal year. Commissioner Vinson then moved to adopt Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Budget Amendment #11 and authorize the Town Administrator and Finance Officer to make any necessary additional amendments to the 2013-2014 Fiscal Year Budget. Commissioner Campbell seconded and the motion carried 5/0.
- B. Property and Liability Insurance Renewal: North Carolina League of Municipalities: White Insurance Agency's property and liability insurance quote of \$21,467 was approximately 20% higher than the current year's premium. Staff has obtained and recommends approval of a comparative quote from the North Carolina League of Municipalities' Interlocal Risk Finance Fund in the amount of \$19,945. Because the League of Municipalities' policy does not offer retroactive public officials liability and employment practices liability insurance, staff also recommends approving a three-year extension of these services from the Town's current carrier in the amount of \$779. Commissioner Campbell then moved to approve the property and liability insurance proposal from the North Carolina League of Municipalities' Interlocal Risk Finance Fund in the amount of \$19,945, to approve an extension of the Public Officials Liability coverage from Argonaut in the amount of \$779, and to authorize the Town Administrator and Finance Officer to execute the necessary contract documents. Commissioner Vinson seconded and the motion carried 5/0.
- C. Town Hall Facility Proposed Interior Design Layouts: Architectural Design Studio (ADS) representative Amy Dowty briefly reviewed the history of the Board's site selection and analysis process from 2007 until the present. These studies concluded that the Florida Terrace site would support the development of a Town Hall facility, and provided two conceptual plans for a two-story building with a total building area of approximately 8,900 square feet and between 21 and 24 parking spaces. ADS used input from Town department heads and individual Board members to prepare conceptual designs, two with three stories and one with two stories. These plans were presented to the Board, Town staff and public for review and comment on June 5. On June 19, ADS presented a refined three-story design which placed the Council chambers on the first floor, the administrative and building inspection offices on the second floor, and the Police Department on the third floor.

Twenty-five parking spaces were proposed for Town staff and visitors. The total building area of this plan was 7,845 square feet, with a building footprint of 3,320 square feet. This plan represented a 12% reduction in total building area, a 40% reduction in building footprint, as well as less paving and site disturbance than the designs proposed in the original feasibility study. The proposed Council chambers remain almost identical in size to the Board's usual meeting space in the Walkup Building with the room divider closed, and will accommodate approximately 40 seated members of the public.

The interior layouts presented at this meeting reflect comments from the June 19 Special Meeting concerning the need for better access to the outdoor terrace from the Council chambers, more privacy for the first and second floor bathroom areas, identifying or providing areas for public art displays, further reducing the height of the retaining walls in the Florida Terrace parking area, and providing a more direct path from the building to the Police parking area on Arkansas Trail. The Florida Terrace parking lot area has been reduced to 19 spaces, including handicapped parking and a covered loading area. Ms. Dowty said that ADS will continue to examine options to reduce building size and incorporate sustainable design features in the final design plans. She then asked the Board how they wished to proceed concerning the following matters as the project moves forward into schematic development:

- Should the new Town Hall facility include a Council chamber?
- Does the Board wish to proceed with the proposed Police Department parking area and direct access path from Arkansas Trail, provide a separate Police parking area on Florida Terrace, or incorporate these spaces into the main parking area?
- Should there be any change in the size or total number of spaces proposed for the parking lot area?

After considering the long-term financial costs to the Town to rent meeting space from the Montreat Conference Center, the potential for scheduling conflicts to reserve those rooms during the summer conference season, the need for flexible, multi-purpose spaces for Board and committee meetings that could also serve as an emergency operations center for the Police Department, as well as the desire to include a smaller meeting area for Closed Sessions or meetings between a citizen and an individual Board member, the Council agreed by consensus to include a Council chamber as presented in the proposed interior design layout.

Discussion was then heard concerning the police parking and separate Police Department entry on Arkansas Trail, and the potential cost savings of eliminating these features. The Board agreed by consensus to remove both the parking area and access path and to incorporate parking for Police vehicles into the main parking area on Florida Terrace. The Board also agreed by consensus for the size of the proposed parking lot to remain at 19

spaces. Chief Staggs confirmed that this decision would not adversely affect Police Department operations. Ms. Dowty and Mr. Cox said that, although not required by current building codes, ADS would design and recommend including a second means of emergency egress from the third floor in the interest of public safety.

Commissioner Vinson then moved to accept the proposed interior design layouts for the new Town Hall facility as amended during this meeting. Commissioner Campbell seconded.

Mayor Pro Tem Standaert briefly reviewed the history of the Board's review of potential Town Hall replacement sites and the efforts taken to ensure that the chosen location would fit the Town's needs. She stated that the Florida Terrace site was appropriately zoned for a municipal facility and was geographically more walkable for a majority of the Town's residents. She reiterated that the Board's decision to purchase and develop the Florida Terrace lots was made after much deliberation and was not taken lightly.

Commissioner Vinson expressed her reservations about the difficulty and expense of building a new Town Hall facility on the proposed lot outside the Montreat Gate due to floodplain and stormwater concerns, potential flood insurance premiums for the building, and the need to raise the structure above the lot's base flood elevation level and possibly include flood-proofing measures in the building's design.

Commissioner Campbell said that among the large volume of correspondence and phone calls the Board members have received concerning the Town Hall replacement project, several citizens had expressed public safety concerns about the Florida Terrace site. She pointed out that the proposed building design incorporated many features to ensure ease of public access. She advised that, both before and after purchasing the Florida Terrace lots, the Board had discussed installing sidewalks in this area to improve pedestrian safety. She felt that adding sidewalks to access the lots outside the Gate would be much more logistically difficult. She also noted that the current Town Services Building received, on an annual average, between 10 and 15 visitors per day.

Mayor Taylor said that, by comparison, the Montreat Morning School generated between 40 and 50 cars per day on Kentucky Road and South Carolina Terrace at morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times.

Commissioner McCaskill said that any new sidewalks on Florida Terrace would connect to the existing sidewalks and crosswalks on Appalachian Way to provide a continuous path of pedestrian access. He also noted that the site plans for the new Town Hall indicated that many of the mature trees would be preserved.

Mayor Pro Tem Standaert and Commissioner Campbell confirmed with Ms. Dowty that the roofline of the proposed Town Hall would be even with the pavement level on Arkansas

Trail, and slightly lower than the roofline of Sylvan Heights. Ms. Dowty also noted that the proposed 3,320 sq. ft. building footprint was smaller than some of the larger single-family homes in Montreat, and that the stormwater impact was comparable to two average-sized homes. Commissioner McCaskill felt that a single-story structure on the suggested lots outside the Montreat Gate would have a significantly larger stormwater impact.

Commissioners Campbell and Vinson thanked the public for their input and encouraged everyone interested in the project to continue calling, e-mailing and writing the Board members to express their support or concerns.

Commissioner Helms said that the Board members had sincerely listened to the public's concerns regarding this issue, had received and responded to numerous phone calls, letters and e-mail messages, and have met individually with members of the opposition group. He stated that while he was not a member of the Board when the Florida Terrace lots were purchased, he supported the decision to build the new Town Hall facility at this location. He did not feel the suggested lot outside the Montreat Gate was the best location for the Town Hall and was not in favor of placing the Town Hall outside Montreat's municipal limits. He said he would be willing to consider site alternatives that were inside the Montreat Gate, would support an independent facility separate from other community entities, and were more suited for a Town Hall than the Florida Terrace lots. He encouraged the public to continue communicating with the Board members and Town staff concerning this issue, but also felt that in the absence of a better location, the Board should proceed with developing the Florida Terrace lots.

The motion to accept the proposed interior design layouts then carried 5/0.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Tom Frist of 98 Frist Road felt the Board was quickly moving in the wrong direction. He said he did not understand why the Town Hall could not remain outside the Montreat Gate, nor why the Board of Commissioners had not agreed to hold an open public forum to debate this issue. He asked how many of the Board members would be willing to conduct such a debate, how this type of meeting could be arranged, and whether at the end of the debate the Board would be willing to vote on a moratorium to defer the project if convinced by the opposition group that this was the best course of action.

Mr. Steve Sewell of 143 Virginia Road said that he had been contacted in his capacity as Montreat Cottagers Association Co-President by Peter Boggs and asked to support the community group wishing to locate the new Town Hall facility outside the Montreat Gate. Mr. Sewell felt that, as a Co-President, it would be inappropriate for him to take a stand on either side of this issue on behalf of the Cottagers Association. Speaking as an individual, he said he could not image a Town Hall location inside the Gate that would not result in some degree of

opposition from neighboring property owners, and said that if he were a Town Council member he would accept this and discount it as a negative factor. He also felt there would be the same possibility for increased property tax rates during subsequent budget years regardless of where the Town Hall is located. He said that if he were a Town Council member he would remind the public that such increases may or may not occur, and that the Board had historically chosen to avoid tax rate increases whenever possible.

Mrs. Peggy Scheu of 123 Eastminster Terrace spoke in favor of the suggested open forum to discuss the Town Hall replacement project, so that the public could receive an answer back from the Board members in response to their comments and questions. She felt that this approach would be an effective means of building a consensus on this issue.

Mr. Mike Sonnenberg of 125 Virginia Road felt that the cost to build and maintain a Council chamber for limited use in the new Town Hall would greatly exceed the rental fees for the Town to continue using Montreat Conference Center facilities. He stated that constructing a multi-story building would be more expensive than a single-story structure, and that the actual amount site disturbance would be greater than just the proposed building footprint area. He also noted that the cost of any related sidewalk extensions or roadway widening on Florida Terrace had not been included in the presented cost estimates for the Town Hall project.

With respect to developing the suggested lots outside the Montreat Gate, Mr. Sonnenberg felt that any floodplain or stormwater issues would be easily addressed through appropriate engineering, and that none of the building's utility lines were proposed to be installed in a basement area. He also said that the higher level of vehicular traffic on Montreat Road would not be relevant, as visitors would enter the building from Rainbow Terrace. He suggested that permeable pavement sidewalks could be installed to increase pedestrian safety without contributing to stormwater runoff in this area. He also criticized the Board for passing a motion to approve the proposed interior design layouts without first hearing any counterarguments from the public, and suggested that the Board should consider receiving public input on motions before taking a vote.

Mayor Taylor advised that the Board provides two opportunities for public comment during each meeting, one before business items are acted upon and one afterward. She also reminded the public that the appropriate place for the Board to discuss and conduct Town business was during an official meeting where decisions and actions can be legally and appropriately made.

### **Upcoming Meeting Dates**

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

**Montreat Board of Commissioners  
Special Meeting Minutes  
June 26, 2014**

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Agenda Items Due: June 27, 2014, 5:00 p.m.  
Town Services Office

Agenda Packets Available: July 1, 2014  
<http://www.townofmontreat.org/TownGovernment.php>  
or Town Services Office

July Montreat Landcare Committee Meeting: July 2, 2014, 9:00 a.m.  
Outdoor Education Classroom

July Agenda Meeting: July 3, 2014, 7:00 p.m.  
Walkup Building

Town Services Office Closure: July 4, 2014  
Independence Day Holiday  
**\*There will be no sanitation collection on this date**

Montreat Gait Run/Walk Event July 4, 2014, 7:00 a.m.  
Montreat Gate

4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade: July 4, 2014, 10:00 a.m.

Town Dumpster Facility Special Hours: July 5, 2014  
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Montreat Cottagers Association Meeting: July 5, 2014, 10:00 a.m.  
Convocation Hall

Summer Bulk Item Collection Date: July 8, 2014

July Town Council Meeting: July 10, 2014, 7:00 p.m.  
Walkup Building

July Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting: July 17, 2014, 7:00 p.m.  
Walkup Building

**Adjournment**

There being no further items of business to discuss, Commissioner McCaskill moved to adjourn the Special Meeting. Commissioner Vinson seconded. The motion carried 5/0 and the meeting was adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

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Letta Jean Taylor, Mayor

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Misty R. Gedlinske, Town Clerk