

**Town of Montreat
Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting
September 29, 2014
Town Services Office**

Board members present: Mayor Pro Tem Mary Standaert
Commissioner Martha Campbell
Commissioner Tim Helms
Commissioner Jack McCaskill
Commissioner Ann Vinson

Board members absent: Mayor Letta Jean Taylor

Town staff present: Misty R. Gedlinske, Town Clerk

Eight members of the public were also present. Mayor Pro Tem Standaert called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and gave the invocation. She announced the recent passing of former Montreat Mayor Mary Frances “Chick” Foreman, and explained that Town Administrator Ron Nalley was unable to attend today’s meeting due to an out-of-state family illness.

Agenda Approval

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

**Town Hall Citizen Comment Card Response Deadline and
Tabulation Period Discussion**

Commissioner Campbell moved to eliminate the postmark requirement for the printed comment card responses, to extend the time period for the ad hoc committee to tabulate these responses until October 8, 2014, and to direct the committee to prepare and forward a report of their findings to the Board of Commissioners on October 9, 2014. Any comment cards received after October 7, 2014 will be considered as public input, but will not be included in the ad hoc committee’s report. Commissioner Vinson seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

Public Comment and General Discussion

Mr. Gordon Neville asked about the purpose of the comment card response deadline extension. Bill Hollins said he had received a number of emails from individuals stating their comment cards had not yet been delivered. Commissioner Vinson explained that according to Montreat Postmistress Cathy Curtis, the source of the delay may be at the Greenville, SC mail distribution center. Mrs. Curtis has filed an official inquiry with the distribution center to notify them of this problem and seek information as to its cause.

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Mr. Ashton Phelps asked whether the ad hoc tabulation committee could use its own discretion to consider electronic comment card responses. Commissioner Campbell stated that while the public continues to be welcome to call or email the Board members with their comments about this or any other Town business matter, the ad hoc committee's responsibility would be to tabulate only the written comment card responses. Mr. Phelps felt that this was an unclear distinction that should be further clarified, and that the ad hoc committee should be free to consider comment card responses in any format.

Mrs. Jacqueline Clark asked whether the Town knew the exact item count and current location of the mailed comment cards, as well as what action the Board might take in the event that a Montreat resident never receives his or her comment card. Commissioners Campbell and Vinson stated that an exact item count was confirmed before the cards were taken to the Montreat Post Office to be mailed, and that Greenville, SC was the central distribution center for all of the regions' out-of-state mail. The exact current location of the cards cannot be determined. The Board will discuss this matter further at their October 2 Agenda Meeting.

Mr. Bill Hollins said that the ad hoc committee would like to know when it can begin tabulating the comment card responses. Mayor Pro Tem Standaert confirmed that the committee could begin its work immediately, and that it should conduct its meetings at the Town Services Office. Mr. Hollins stated that the committee had not anticipated meeting at the Town Services Office, and would like to take the comment cards to another location to review and tabulate them. Commissioner Vinson felt that the original comment cards should remain at the Town Services Office. Commissioner Helms disagreed, stating he felt that the committee should be trusted to take the cards to the location of their choosing. Mrs. Gedlinske said that staff would recommend that the original comment cards be retained at the Town Services Office in the same manner as all other public documents. Commissioner Campbell felt that the Board should have provided instructions to the ad hoc committee at the time the committee was formed, and said that this matter would be addressed at the October 2 Agenda Meeting. Mr. Hollins said that the ad hoc committee would await further instructions from the Board before beginning its work.

Mr. Michael Sonnenberg suggested that some Montreat residents who only recently received their comment cards may have thrown them away, believing that their responses could not be returned before the September 26 deadline. Commissioner Helms felt that without knowing if anyone had actually disposed of their comment card, the Board would not be able to address this situation.

In response to Commissioner Campbell, Mrs. Gedlinske stated that Sunshine List and social media messages had been posted to give notice of today's meeting and the Board's intent to consider a comment card response deadline extension. Additional messages will be sent following today's meeting to advise the public of the extended response period.

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Commissioner Helms said he did not recall voting to prohibit electronic or facsimile comment card responses, and asked when this matter had been decided. Mrs. Gedlinske stated that these instructions were included in Mayor Taylor's statements to the public during the September 18 Special Meeting.

Adjournment

Commissioner Helms then moved to adjourn the Special Meeting. Commissioner Vinson seconded. The motion carried 5/0 and the meeting was adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

Mary Standaert, Mayor Pro Tem

Misty R. Gedlinske, Town Clerk