

**Town of Montreat
Bridge Committee
May 3, 2016 – 5:00 p.m.
Wayout Building**

Board members present: Chairwoman Alice Lentz
Vice- Chair Dan Dean
Bob Cunningham
Lee Lancaster
Jan McRae
Commissioner Kent Otto
Tyler Smith (arrived at 5:12 p.m.)

Board members absent: None

Town staff present: Ron Nalley, Town Administrator
Angie Murphy, Town Clerk
Steve Freeman, Public Works Director

Twenty two members of the public were present. Mrs. Lentz called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m., and led the group in a moment of silence.

Agenda Approval

After reviewing the agenda, Mr. Dan Dean moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Ms. Lancaster seconded and the motion carried 6/0.

Old Business

- A. Oaths of Office: Town Clerk Angie Murphy administered the Oaths of Office to Bob Cunningham and Tyler Smith when he arrived at the meeting.
- B. Approval of April 19, 2016 Organizational Meeting Minutes: Chairwoman Lentz had several corrections to the April 19 minutes and reviewed them to the Committee. Commissioner Kent Otto moved to accept the April 19, 2016 Meeting Minutes as amended. Vice-Chair Dan Dean seconded and the motion passed 6/0.

New Business

- A. Open Forum:

Chairwoman Lentz welcomed everyone in attendance and gave a brief review of the purpose of the committee. The Bridge Committee encouraged the public to read the Categorical Exclusion Document which can be found on the Town of Montreat website. Chairwoman Lentz reiterated her

aspiration for the Montreat Bridge Committee (MBC) in that they fulfill their goal by June such that the Committee's work is viewed as a true effort to learn the will of the people by being open and transparent and that some consensus might be reached to propel the Montreat community forward. Chairwoman Lentz opened the floor up for comments and reminded everyone to be respectful of time and of each other.

- Mr. Hugh Alexander of 300 Texas Road, asked the Committee what their views were for the Texas Road Bridge Project. Vice Chair Dean advised that the Committee had only expressed their aspirations for the Committee. Ms. Lancaster stated that all members are currently in the information gathering stage. Chairwoman Lentz reviewed the purposes of the next two meetings with Mr. Alexander.
- Mrs. Patsy Burdette of Texas Road Spur, expressed her concerns that Texas Road Spur was a dangerous road. Mrs. Burdette does not see a need for a vehicular bridge on Texas Road but would like to see a pedestrian bridge. She also felt that if Texas Road were one-way it would help ease the amount of Club traffic and cut down on the wear and tear on Texas Road Spur. Chairwoman Lentz asked Mrs. Burdette to email these thoughts to the Committee.
- Mr. Eric Nichols of 527 Suwannee Drive, felt that there needs to be more information from the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the Federal Highway Commission (FHWC) on the cost difference between not having a vehicular bridge versus a pedestrian bridge. Chairwoman Lentz agreed with Mr. Nichols and advised him there is a conference call scheduled in the immediate future that will hopefully clarify the answer to his questions. The conference call will include the Mayor, Chairwoman Lentz, representatives from the NCDOT and FHWC and members of Town Staff.
- Ms. Susan Neville of 216 Alabama Terrace, mentioned that a footbridge similar to what connects Kentucky Road and Greybeard Trail would be a nice addition to Texas Road.
- Mr. Erskine Clarke of 558 Providence Terrace, feels that there were three reasons for opposition to the proposed Texas Road Bridge: (1) Cost - There needs to be careful evaluation with regards to the cost of a new bridge. Mr. Clarke expressed his thoughts that the MBC look for advice from professionals that have no financial interest in the Bridge Project. He believes that KCI has too large of a financial interest therefore their opinions could be influenced. (2) Aesthetics - The proposed bridge was too high and too wide and (3) Proximity to Welch Field. Mr. Clarke feels there are three options: (1) do nothing to the current bridge and let it continue to deteriorate which doesn't seem to be a prudent option, (2) revisit the Tennessee Road location and review the pros and cons and seek professional input on traffic flow, and (3) investigate an inviting, visually appealing pedestrian bridge which Mr. Clarke feels will have a smaller financial impact. Mr. Clarke wants this committee to work towards a "symbolic bridge" to heal the community of Montreat. Vice-Chair Dean is concerned that the time limit the MBC has been given could limit their ability to call in outside professional assistance. It may be the

Committee will offer a suggestion to the Board in June with stipulations that they do more investigation on the matter.

- Mrs. Grace Nichols of 527 Suwannee Drive, felt that traffic flow is an important consideration and the future upkeep of bridges and buildings could be impacted by the current one-way in/one-way out situation in Montreat. Mrs. Nichols feels that safety is the responsibility of elected officials and Town Administration and with any type of emergency situation all traffic will be directed to one road out of the community.
- Mr. Hugh Alexander of 300 Texas Road, stated that his family has had a home in Montreat for 65 years and he is now a permanent resident. Mr. Alexander stated that there has been a bridge on Texas Road for as long as he can remember and it served the Town well. Mr. Alexander hopes the Montreat Bridge Committee seeks outside recommendations from people with no financial interest or bias. Mr. Alexander surmises that restoring the bridge on Texas Road would eliminate most of the traffic on Texas Road Spur.
- Mrs. Martha Campbell of 149 Maryland Place, feels that the residents are in agreement with the categories of concern: public safety, financial integrity, environmental impact and quality of life. Mrs. Campbell summarized why she voted for the bridge to be rebuilt in its current location when she served on the Board of Commissioners. The current location is already owned by the Town, would cause the least amount of environmental impact and is the least expensive option. Mrs. Campbell commended the Town Administrator, Staff and the previous Town Council for being accepted into the State's Municipal Bridge Program. It is a huge accomplishment and there are a lot of towns who have been waiting for years to be accepted into the program which will pay 80% of the costs.
- Mrs. Ginny Porter of 388 Appalachian Way, expressed her concerns about the traffic during the Conference Season and the safety of the small children being dropped off and picked up from Clubs. Mrs. Porter feels that Montreat needs a bridge.
- Mr. Gill Campbell of 149 Maryland Place, mentioned that perhaps the road could be one-way during the conference season and two-way during the off-season. Mr. Nalley advised that there are simple road construction design changes that could safely make Texas Road a two lane road.
- Mr. Rusty Frank of 205 Harmony Lane, feels that citizens of Montreat could give the bridge Montreat ambiance.
- Mr. Jennings White of 501 South Carolina Terrace, feels that Montreat does not need such a large expensive bridge. Mr. White questioned if the Town or NCDOT could lower the tonnage and resurface the current bridge or resurface the bridge and make it pedestrian access only.

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He feels that whatever is decided it should be kept small to keep with what currently exists in Montreat.

- Mr. Erskine Clarke of 558 Providence Terrace, felt that the information that Mrs. Campbell provided was heard and rejected by the community. Mr. Clarke suggested requesting additional time and money from the Board to facilitate making decisions.
 - Mr. Gill Campbell of 149 Maryland Place, hoped that the Montreat Bridge Committee and the Town Council do not lose the money offered through the Municipal Bridge Program. Chairwoman Lentz agreed that the flexibility of the funds is an important thing that needs to be considered. Mr. Cunningham appreciated all the public input, but he thinks we need to think of the future of Montreat rather than what we had in the past.
 - Mr. Rusty Frank of 205 Harmony Lane, advised that the North Carolina Department of Transportation inspected Texas Road Bridge in March of 2008 and their findings indicated that the bridge was in an extremely bad state and needed prompt attention.
 - Mr. Brinkley Melvin of 246 Texas Road Extension, stated that the new Board of Commissioners voted against the Texas Road Bridge Project and that he would like to see the current bridge converted to a pedestrian bridge. Mr. Melvin did agree with the suggestion to extend the deadline to report back to the Board.
- B. Bridge Committee-Reports, Communications and General Discussion: Ms. Lancaster invited the public to call, email or even stop by for a visit with Board members if they had more comments with regards to the bridge. Chairwoman Lentz announced that the next meeting of the Montreat Board Committee will be on May 17 at 5:00 p.m. at the Wayout Building.

Adjournment

Ms. Lancaster moved to adjourn the Montreat Bridge Committee meeting. Mr. Cunningham seconded and the motion carried 7/0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Alice Lentz, Montreat Board Chair

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

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