



Town of Montreat

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March 14, 2007

TO: Mayor and Board of Commissioners

FR: Ron Nalley, Town Administrator

RE: Board Retreat Discussion – Town Hall and Public Works Facility

Last year, the Board set as a goal, the consideration and funding of a Town Services building replacement study. This past month, staff inventoried, reviewed and selected approximately ten different sites for consideration. A map of the potential sites is attached for your information. The inventory does not include all the possible sites on which a town hall could be located, but represents sites where the likelihood of relocation was higher or that the site was mentioned by a member of Council in prior discussions.

I should start by stating that the Town does not currently own any property other than one-hundred feet radius around each well site and our current parking area. However, as you are well aware, the property around each well site is restricted by State statutes and can not be developed. I should also point out that the Town currently rents the Town Services building from the Montreat Conference Center. While the rent is for a very good term (\$1.00 for 100 years), the Town has no ownership in the building or the land that surrounds it.

Built in the mid 1960s, the Town of Montreat began leasing the Town Services building in the early 1970s. Since that time, minor repairs and upgrades have been made to the building, but the building is approaching the end of its useful life as a building that can meet the needs of the Town. The building lacks a proper heating and air system and an adequate electrical system, while the roof, storage areas and restrooms are all in need of renovation or replacement or do not meet modern ADA or safety requirements. Office space, meeting space consideration and proper “flow” control also contribute to the reasons for considering new space to house the administrative, police and public works offices.

In its review, staff considered the following sites:

- 1) Claybrook Property
- 2) Cooley Property located at the Gate
- 3) Geneva Road Parking Lot Property
- 4) Graham Office Property

- 5) Historical Foundation
- 6) Montreat College Property located at the Gate
- 7) Old Store Property located next to Well A
- 8) Old Tennis Courts Property next to Post Office
- 9) Phillips Property combined with the MRA Creekside House Property
- 10) Present Town Services Building Site

In review of each site, staff considered a number of factors, including: access, location of flood plain, availability of utilities, property size, ADA approach requirements, convenience and visibility. Staff then ranked each site based on the above factors and made a final determination on the overall ranking of each site.

You might notice two very important factors missing. First, staff did not take into account ownership of any proposed property. Montreat is unique in that most locations suitable for a new town hall are owned by Montreat College, Montreat Conference Center, or some other private entity. Any location considered suitable, will require careful review, planning and negotiation in order to secure the property. The second factor not considered is cost. Without authorization to negotiate for a piece of property, it was entirely too difficult to estimate what a piece of property might be purchased for, or if it could be purchased at all. Again, these two factors alone might severely limit the final choices available to the Town or offer a combination of choices that might be the best selection.

The sites that were considered suitable for only a Town Hall included: Cooley Property, Graham Office Property, Historical Foundation, Old Store Site, and the Present Town Services Building Site.

The sites, after review by staff, ranked from Best to Worst:

- 1) Graham Office Property
- 2) Cooley Property
- 3) Historical Foundation
- 4) Present Town Services Building Site
- 5) Old Store Site

The sites that were considered suitable for both a Town Hall and a Public Works Facility included: Claybrook Property, Geneva Road Parking Lot Property, Montreat College Property located at Gate, Old Tennis Courts Property located next to Post Office and the Phillips Property combined with the MRA Creekside House Property.

The sites, after review by staff, ranked from Best to Worst:

- 1) Old Tennis Courts Property located next to Post Office
- 2) Phillips Property combined with the MRA Creekside House Property
- 3) Montreat College Property located at the Gate
- 4) Geneva Road Parking Lot Property
- 5) Claybrook Property

Following staffs review, the Board at this point should consider:

1. Is there consensus that a new Town Hall and Public Works Facility is needed?
2. If so, should a site be selected that would allow for the construction of a new Town Hall, as well as, a new Public Works Facility on a single lot?
3. Are there other sites that need to be considered?
4. If not, should staff be authorized to discuss possible plans with the owners of the top three ranked sites to determine interest?
5. Final rankings can then be determined and a specific site study with design considerations could then be completed.

I understand that this is a big decision for the Board and it should certainly not be taken lightly. We do feel that the future needs of our organization should be taken seriously along with consideration of the financial impact to our residents. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have questions or require any additional information.