

**Town of Montreat  
Board of Commissioners  
Town Council Public Forum  
January 5, 2017  
Walkup Building**

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Board members present: Mayor Tim Helms  
Mayor Pro Tem Kitty Fouche  
Commissioner Bill Gilliland  
Commissioner Kent Otto  
Commissioner Mary Standaert  
Commissioner Ann Vinson

Board members absent: None

Town staff present: Al Richardson, Interim Town Administrator  
Barry Creasman, Senior Water Operator  
Angie Murphy, Town Clerk  
Steve Freeman, Public Works Director  
Jack Staggs, Chief of Police

**Call to Order**

Approximately 18 people were in attendance. Mayor Helms called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the group in a moment of silence.

**Agenda Approval**

Commissioner Gilliland moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Vinson seconded and the agenda was approved 5/0.

**Public Forum**

Mrs. Grace Nichols of 527 Suwannee Drive, spoke to her desire to keep the Agenda Meetings in place. Mrs. Nichols feels the Agenda Meeting provides the Commissioners and the Public one full week to review, research and consider the possible impact of upcoming issues. The Agenda Meeting also equips the public with at least one week to share their thoughts with the Commissioners. The Public evaluates the performance of its elected officials by what happens in meetings. Many want to see the decision making process in action for transparency. Mrs. Nichols feels that the Agenda is a business meeting for the Board in which the public is allowed to attend.

Mrs. Ruth Currie of 104 John Knox Road submitted an email as read by Mrs. Grace Nichols, stated that Montreat Town Council used to only have 1 meeting per month until a really bad decision was made. The Town Council itself mandated an agenda to allow time for research and to understand the pros and cons of issues before them. Mrs. Currie feels that it will be detrimental to the Board if they do away with the Agenda meeting.

Mr. Wade Burns of 232 North Carolina Terrace, wants to reinstate conversation about the possibility of voluntary annexation up at the old Foreman property on Greybeard. Mr. Burns had broached this topic several years ago with the previous Commission but felt it got bogged down in the gap between what might work between property owners and the Board. Mr. Burns stated that the roads are already in place as well as 6 inch water lines and it makes sense financially. Mr. Burns would like to meet individually or in small groups to get familiar with the concepts involved. Commissioner Standaert asked Mr. Burns how many homeowners were interested in the possibility of voluntary annexation. Mr. Burns stated that there were several ordinances that made it virtually impossible for homeowners to use their property without changes to the ordinance structure. Mr. Burns stated there are not any residents who are not in favor of voluntary annexation as long as their properties are usable. Voluntary annexation requires 100% of property owners support. Former Town Administrator Ron Nalley was supposed to draft a letter to the property owners to notify them of the possibility of voluntary annexation and that letter was never sent. Commissioner Standaert asked Interim Town Administrator Al Richardson to find the letter and provide it to Mr. Burns. It was decided that conversation would be reinstated about this topic.

Mr. Tom Frist of 98 Frist Road, feels that a committee should be formed to discuss evacuation plans within the different areas in Montreat. Mr. Frist also mentioned the idea of a used fire engine to remain in the Lookout area with volunteers to man in the event of an emergency. Mayor Helms mentioned that there was an evacuation plan in place. Chief Jack Staggs stated that there are different scenarios which will require different evacuation options.

Mrs. Grace Nichols of 527 Suwannee Drive, feels there should be evacuation plans based on the seasons: summer vs. winter; college students vs. full time residents. Commissioner Vinson stated that Montreat Landcare and the Montreat Tree Board are going to work on ways to disseminate information about firewise safety as well as evacuation plans in the event of a fire or extremely dry weather.

Mrs. Shannon Ingersoll of 124 Eastminster Terrace, was concerned about speeding problems from Upper Lookout above the maintenance shed down to Missouri Road. Chief Staggs said he would speak with Officer Whitson who is radar certified to patrol the area at night as well as using the speed sign.

**Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Gilliland moved to adjourn the Public Forum Meeting. Commissioner Standaert seconded and the motion carried 5/0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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Tim Helms, Mayor

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Angie Murphy, Town Clerk