

**Town of Montreat
Board of Commissioners
Town Council Public Forum
February 2, 2017
Walkup Building**

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

Board members absent: Commissioner Bill Gilliland

Town staff present: Al Richardson, Interim Town Administrator
Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

Call to Order

Approximately 27 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 Vinson moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Otto seconded and the agenda was approved 4/0.

Public Forum

Mrs. Grace Nichols of 527 Suwannee Drive, was interested to hear how the Council gathered their information from the people they serve as well as vetting ideas and suggestions. Mrs. Nichols expressed her appreciation for the 30 minute Public Forum period. She felt that it is not as intimidating as perhaps some of the previously timed public comment periods during the meetings. Commissioner Vinson stated that she relies on emails and open conversations with community members. Commissioner Standaert consistently relies on emails as well as being present in the community and in the Town Services Offices. She frequently visits the Friends of Montreat Facebook Page which is operated by members of the Community. Commissioner Standaert will also be available at the Huckleberry on the first Friday of the month from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. for anyone who would like to visit with her. Commissioner Otto prefers face-to-face conversations rather than email. Mrs. Nichols also suggested that instead of appointing members to committees that it would be a good idea to ask for volunteers to get the cross section of the community that might not be represented. Mayor Pro Tem Fouche had mentioned the idea of a blog or a discussion board but does not want it to turn into a forum for unpleasant comments. She also relies on emails and being approachable within the Town. Commissioner Standaert mentioned that the Town of Cary had an interactive way of communicating with their Board and it would be nice to look into a similar program for Montreat.

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Mr. Joe Standaert of 118 Shenandoah Terrace mentioned that the Town of Montreat used to send out a newsletter to all taxpayers to keep them up to date on Town happenings but that had ceased to exist in order to save money a few years ago. Mr. Standaert had some concerns about how taxpayers receive their information if they are not members of the Sunshine List or visit the Facebook Page and Town Website.

Commissioner Standaert suggested that perhaps a more user-friendly website be investigated once the new Town Administrator is in place.

Mrs. Shannon Ingersoll of 124 Eastminster Terrace, was unable to make it to the recent Florida Terrace Workshop but she wanted to express her opinion that the property should be sold in order to get the property back on the tax rolls. Commissioner Standaert stated that the property had only been on the tax rolls for about 2 years and prior to that it was part of the College's non-profit organization.

Mr. Don Reid of 127 Shenandoah Terrace, wanted to speak to the topic of changing the Town of Montreat's Mission Statement to include the word "inclusive". Mr. Reid was against this verbiage for several reasons one of which was that "inclusive" is a hard word to define. Mr. Reid felt that this change could further divide the Town. Mr. Reid referenced an issue that occurred with the Charlotte Town Council which became a national issue. Mr. Reid also referenced that a previous Council spent a lot of time and effort on the Living Wage Law and every single employee of the Town of Montreat makes more than the living wage. Mr. Reid felt that a problem was addressed that did not need to be. Mr. Reid felt that before the Town tackles "inclusiveness" we need to look inside the Town where the churches have divided, fraud was used to describe the November election, and people do not speak to each other in the post office. Mr. Reid felt that we should start inside the town and not worry about what other people outside think.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, Mayor Pro Tem Fouche moved to adjourn the Public Forum Meeting. Commissioner Vinson seconded and the motion carried 4/0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Tim Helms, Mayor

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk