

**Town of Montreat  
Board of Commissioners  
Public Forum  
March 3, 2016  
Walkup Building**

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

Board members absent: None

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

**Public Forum**

Mayor Helms called the Public Forum to order at 6:30 p.m. and briefly explained that at the Annual Board Retreat it was decided by Council to hold a forum thirty minutes prior to the Agenda Meeting every month to maintain open lines of communication and that the public should feel free to talk on whatever topics that they feel led. Approximately 38 people were in attendance.

Tom Frist of 98 Frist Road, expressed his views on ending the lawsuit quickly, fairly and inexpensively. Mr. Frist mentioned that there are other properties to investigate for a new Town Hall, both inside and outside the Gate, and he believes that if a committee were to get together and really study all the available options that a resolution could be found. Mr. Frist also indicated that the Cooley-Griffin property is now available and could be a possible location for a new Town Hall.

Mary Jo Wright of 399 Appalachian Way, expressed her thoughts on the Texas Road Bridge from a safety perspective. Mrs. Wright painted a verbal picture of what it would be like if people had to evacuate from Lookout Road onto Assembly Drive. The sheer number of people and vehicles could put Montreat residents in great danger. Mrs. Wright feels there are many other options to consider when choosing to build a bridge other than the physical aspects especially when it comes to the potential for loss of lives.

Rusty Frank of 205 Harmony Lane, agreed that a new bridge is needed for safety reasons and he commended the Montreat Conference Center for managing traffic situations in the past in that area regarding dropping off and picking up children at the childcare facility.

Rev. Bob Chastain of 417 Appalachian Way, addressed his views on keeping the compactor site open to the residents of Montreat. Mayor Helms informed the public that it was decided at the Annual Board Retreat that special imprinted bags will be available for a price at the Town Services Building for kitchen trash only, and that those bags would be accepted five days a week. Mayor Helms advised that details are still in the planning process and there will be more information to follow. Mr. Nalley advised that the compactor site will not be open to the public but a new fenced in area will be constructed to store the refuse until it can be moved to the compactor. Mr. Nalley added that there will be more discussion around sanitation at the April Town Council Meeting.

Annie Carlson of 116 West College Street in Black Mountain, representing Montreat College, referenced the recent Crisis Situation training that was held at the College that included members of the College, Town of Montreat, Town of Black Mountain, Buncombe County EMS and Sheriff's Department, churches and teachers. Ms. Carlson mentioned that it was discussed in the training that Montreat does have challenges with the one way in/one way out. Even though the Texas Road Bridge doesn't solve this issue it is the preference of the College to have another way to get to Montreat Road in the case of an emergency.

Janie Moore of 100 Frist Road, referenced a prior announcement that a presentation by KCI would be on the Agenda for February and that she had heard that the bridge could be lowered. Mayor Helms read Option B which states, "This option leaves the horizontal location of the bridge as is but lowers the bridge elevation significantly. It requires that the town accept up to a 1 foot rise in flood elevation. A CLOMR (Conditional Letter of Map Revision) showing the revised flood limits must be done. While the horizontal location will not change, the vertical elevation will. A new roadway grade and a new bridge must be designed. Other than proceeding as currently designed, this is the simplest and quickest. It could also result in construction cost savings in a shorter bridge." This would be a delay of up to twelve months and design costs totaling \$200,000 (\$40,000 by the Town of Montreat and \$160,000 by FHWA). Mrs. Moore feels that the availability of the options could help everyone make their decisions based on facts. Mrs. Moore feels that it is in the best interest of Montreat College, Montreat Conference Center and the Town to not miss out on this opportunity to replace the bridge especially with the 80% matching grant and that it's critical for future generations that we take care of our crumbling infrastructure today.

Mike Sonnenberg of 125 Virginia Road, referenced the amount of bridges in the Town of Montreat in comparison to there being only one Gate. Mr. Sonnenberg advised that we don't need to pollute the environment with extra things that we don't need.

Tom Frist of 98 Frist Road, asked if the Tennessee Road Option for the new bridge was still available. Mayor Helms read Option C which states, "This option selects one of the previously studied alternatives and perhaps the one that ties opposite Tennessee Road. The planning document must be reopened and agreement with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), FHWA

and others obtained. There is no guarantee that an alternate other than replace at the existing location could be selected. With the MRA recreational impacts, an avoidance alternate must be studied. This would push alternate selection back to the current alternate, along existing. This essentially creates a new project and we would be starting over on the design. New surveys, roadway design, drainage design, bridge design and utility coordination would be required. Different R/W and easements must be acquired.” This would cause a delay of six months (for planning document), twenty-two months (new design) and final costs would be \$300,000 (\$60,000 by the Town of Montreat and \$240,000 by FHWA).

Emory Underwood of 120 John Knox Road, posed the question of moving the bridge slightly further up Texas Road which would offer a slightly different shape and less of a curve. Mr. Underwood also mentioned the increasingly large numbers of church vans that are in Town and making roads more accessible to them.

Perrin Wright of 399 Appalachian Way, mentioned a conversation he had with Mr. Richard DuBose, of the Mountain Retreat Association, in which a letter was drafted and presented to the MRA Board imploring them to support replacing the Texas Road Bridge. Mr. Wright didn't get a response from this letter and he found this hard to believe since the road has such an impact on MRA's own facilities. Mr. Wright believes there is too much institutional conflict and not enough community interest and he expressed his hope that this matter will not be turned over to those operating in their own self-interest.

Joe Standaert of 118 Shenandoah Terrace, referenced the letter from KCI in the packet and implored everyone to read the facts. Mr. Standaert also thanked former Commissioner Jack McCaskill for all his hard work which led to these alternate options being explored.

### **Adjournment**

The Public Forum adjourned at 7:01 p.m. with a motion by Commissioner Ann Vinson and a second by Commissioner Bill Gilliland.

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Tim Helms, Mayor

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Angie Murphy, Town Clerk