

**Town of Montreat  
Board of Commissioners  
Town Council Meeting  
October 8, 2015  
Walkup Building**

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Board members present: Mayor Letta Jean Taylor  
Commissioner Martha Campbell  
Commissioner Tim Helms  
Commissioner Jack McCaskill  
Commissioner Ann Vinson

Board members absent: Mayor Pro Tem Mary Standaert

Town staff present: Ron Nalley, Town Administrator  
Stefan Stackhouse, Finance Officer & Deputy Town Clerk  
Steve Freeman, Public Works Director  
Barry Creasman, Senior Water Operator  
Jack Staggs, Chief of Police  
David Currie, Code Administrator/Building Inspector

Approximately 35 members of the public were also present. Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, and in prayer.

**Agenda Approval**

Mayor Taylor stated that it was necessary to remove the Closed Session from the Agenda, and asked if there were any other changes. Commissioner Helms moved to approve the Agenda as amended. Commissioner Vinson seconded and the motion carried 4/0.

**Mayor's Communications**

Mayor Taylor reported that she attended the heritage luncheon at Montreat College. She noted that there were 16 alumni attending their 50<sup>th</sup> reunion and that she was able to present a Proclamation to them in honor of their special day. Mayor Taylor announced that there would be a shred day sponsored by the Better Business Bureau of Western North Carolina at the Executive Park College Street parking lot in Asheville on Saturday, October 10 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mayor Taylor then recognized Commissioner Campbell and members of the Montreat Landcare Committee for a special presentation. Commissioner Campbell joined Mr. Bill Seaman, Chair of the Landcare Committee, in presenting to the Town their ten-year certificate as a Certified Community Wildlife Habitat. Montreat was the eighth community in the nation and the first in North Carolina to be certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat. Those in the audience who had certified their individual properties as backyard wildlife habitats were also recognized. Mr. Seaman then acknowledged that Mr. O'Neil Tate deserves 99% of the credit for this program, and announced that Mr. Tate had been given the first ever Leadership and Service Award for his efforts by the Montreat Landcare Committee.

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**Consent Agenda Review**

With the adoption of the Consent Agenda, the Board approved the following items:

- May 21, 2015, Special Meeting – Town Council Meeting Minutes as amended
- June 4, 2015, Agenda Meeting Minutes
- June 11, 2015, Town Council Meeting Minutes
- June 18, 2015, Special Meeting Minutes
- June 25, 2015, Special Meeting Minutes

**Town Administrator's Communications**

- Mr. Nalley noted that the Minutes for the July 2<sup>nd</sup> Agenda Meeting, the July 9<sup>th</sup> Town Council Meeting, the August 6<sup>th</sup> Agenda Meeting, the August 13<sup>th</sup> Town Council Meeting, the September 3<sup>rd</sup> Agenda Meeting, and the September 10<sup>th</sup> Town Council Meeting are still pending.
- Mr. Nalley reported that the Texas Road Bridge plans were completed at 100% and were being reviewed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Right-of-way agreements have been approved with Duke Energy and Charter Communications, while agreements with AT&T and Montreat Conference Center are still pending.
- Due to a death in Mr. Freeman's family, the sanitation services discussion has been delayed until the Board's November meeting.
- The hiring committee interviewed four candidates and has unanimously narrowed the field down to two finalists. The final step of the hiring process will be for the two finalists to interview with the Board of Commissioners. During discussion, the Board identified Thursday October 15<sup>th</sup> as the best date to schedule the special meeting. Mr. Nalley will confirm this date with the finalists.
- Mr. Nalley reported that fortunately the Town did not receive the rain and wind that had been forecasted for our area. The Town experienced some damage including several trees that came down including a very large tree on West Virginia Terrace and some minor drainage issues and washouts that will have to be repaired. The only known structural damage occurred to the roof at the Town Services Building. Due a significant leak, the roof and the ceiling area in a portion of the building will need to be repaired and/or replaced.

**Administrative Reports**

Police Chief: Chief Staggs presented and reviewed the September 2015 monthly departmental activity report. The CodeRed emergency communications system was tested in advance of the

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storm and the police department participated with other departments in advance preparation activities. Chief Staggs reported on a breaking and entering incident on September 15<sup>th</sup>, and reminded people to lock their doors. The department conducted 57 house checks subsequent to this incident which revealed eight of the houses were unsecured. Social media was used to notify the public of the incident, which resulted in some useful information being provided to the department by the public. Chief Staggs also reported on a response to an alarm call, in which there was an incorrect address associated with the alarm, resulting in a delayed response. The Chief then urged people to call Black Mountain dispatch if they observe any suspicious activity and to use caution as the department continues to receive reports of a mother bear and her two cubs being seen around town. In response to a question from Commissioner Campbell, Chief Staggs confirmed that other members of the Town staff worked with the Police Department during the breaking and entering incident, and that it is extremely helpful to have their assistance during times like this.

Mayor Taylor reminded the public that if they did not receive a CodeRed call, it means that they have not signed up yet, and urged them to do so now, by registering at the Town of Montreat website.

Public Works Director: Mr. Freeman reported that the Public Works crew was engaged in a lot of preparation before the storm event and with clean-up during and after the event. Mr. Freeman thanked Mr. Mike Harrison and Mr. Barry Creasman for their work during the night of the storm. The Town hauled five loads of debris from trees that had fallen during the storm. Mr. Freeman also reported that two water line breaks occurred during that same period and that there will be a bulk item collection day on October 27<sup>th</sup>. In response to a question from Commissioner Vinson, Mr. Freeman confirmed that the footbridge along the walking path across from Shenandoah Terrace performed perfectly during the storm.

Finance Officer: Mr. Stackhouse presented and reviewed the following monthly reports:

- August 2015 Financial Summary Report;
- Final August 2015 Detailed Financial Statement;
- Preliminary September 2015 Detailed Financial Statement;
- September 30, 2015 Cash and Investment Earnings Report.

Building Inspector/Code Administrator: Mr. Currie presented and reviewed the September departmental activity report. The Planning and Zoning Commission is reviewing stream buffer requirements in the Stormwater Ordinance and have scheduled a meeting to consider a conditional use permit. In the near future, the Planning and Zoning Commission will be reviewing building setback regulations and ADA accessibility provisions in the Zoning Ordinance.

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**Public Comment - Agenda Items**

Mayor Taylor reiterated that this Public Comment period was intended for remarks pertaining to items listed on the meeting agenda, including staff reports and communications.

There were no comments from the public at this time.

**Old Business**

There were no matters under Old Business scheduled for discussion.

**New Business**

- A. Public Works Department Vehicle Purchase – 2015 Ford F-250: Commissioner Campbell moved to approve the purchase of a 2015 Ford F250 truck from Asheville Ford in the amount of \$39,875.46, to be financed by Asheville Savings Bank over a 36 month term at the rate of 2.69% fixed and to authorize the Mayor and Town Administrator to execute the necessary contract documents. Commissioner Vinson seconded and the motion carried 4/0.
- B. Montreat General Ordinance, Chapter K, Article V: Trees and the Tree City USA Application – Montreat Landcare: Commissioner Vinson moved to call for a Public Hearing on November 12, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as possible to discuss Proposed Montreat General Ordinance, Chapter K, Article V – Trees. Commissioner McCaskill seconded the motion. Mayor Taylor then recognized Mr. Bill Seaman, Chair of the Montreat Landcare Committee, to speak to the proposed Ordinance.

Mr. Seaman first reported on two tree related efforts by Montreat Landcare. Mr. Seaman announced that the first release of the Laricobius beetles to control the Hemlock woolly adelgid insect that is destroying hemlock trees was made on September 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Montreat Post Office. At the Landcare Committee meeting, Mr. John Johnson announced that commitments of \$19,380 have been secured for the project. Sponsors include the Montreat Cottagers, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Mr. Seaman also announced that the Montreat College Outdoor Education Program has two students working on an educational project this semester to present the hemlock story to the public. Professor Dottie Shuman is their mentor, and the Town's wayfinding/signage program is to help with the strategic location of educational signs concerning the beetle project and other efforts concerning this iconic tree's ecology, health, restoration and overall value to Montreat.

Mr. Seaman then reported that despite months of careful effort under the auspices of Landcare to prepare and submit to the Board tonight a complete draft application for status as a nationally recognized Tree City USA, they are not able to fulfill that task. At the last Landcare

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Committee meeting they received concerns for one of the application's four required elements, namely updated and revised language concerning trees on public lands and ~~ofgway~~. Although advance reading of the Ordinance by both the members of Landcare and an external panel of three expert reviewers found no red flags, nonetheless the committee—with several members absent—did not vote to send the packet forward to Town Council. Thus, it no longer seems possible to meet the submittal deadline of the Arbor Day Foundation for 2015 certification. In turn, for some this is a setback because it takes us out of the running to secure certain additional extramural funds in 2016, and beyond, for work such as hemlock tree conservation and college student projects in the community.

Commissioner Vinson expressed her belief that this is an extremely important program for the community to pursue, and that there must be ways to continue moving this project forward. Tree City USA designation opens up the possibility of external funding and will help provide training, educational materials and programming.

There being no further discussion, the motion carried 4/0.

- C. Hydrology Study – Texas Road Bridge: Commissioner McCaskill moved to approve the proposed scope of services from Joshua Robinson in an amount not to exceed \$650 for a hydrology study at the Texas Road bridge site and to authorize the Mayor and Town Administrator to execute any necessary related documents. Commissioner Vinson seconded the motion. In response to a question from Commissioner Helms, Commissioner McCaskill stated that this study would be a third party review of the hydrology report prepared by KCI Associates. The review might indicate if further study is necessary or if no changes are needed to the proposed design. Further study may also indicate that the height of the bridge may be lowered or that the opening below the bridge could be shortened. Commissioner McCaskill stated that the study would also be helpful if further review by the North Carolina Department of Transportation was necessary in order to change the design. It is expected that the study could be completed within a day. There being no further discussion, the motion carried 3/1 with Commissioner Helms voting against the motion.

**Public Comment – Other Topics**

Mayor Taylor reiterated that this Public Comment period was intended for remarks pertaining to public business items not listed on the meeting agenda, including any reports or communications from other community entities.

- Perrin Wright, 399 Appalachian Way, stated that he has been investigating the bridges around town. Of all five bridges in Montreat crossing Flat Creek, Texas Road bridge is the oldest and closest to the creek, while the Shenandoah Bridge is the newest and one of the highest from the creek. The Shenandoah bridge is 34 feet wide, while the proposed Texas Road bridge is 42 feet wide, which includes a five foot pedestrian walkway. Mr. Wright

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questioned whether Mr. Boggs really understood how big the Shenandoah bridge was when it was highlighted in the recent mailer as the most appealing bridge in Montreat. Mr. Wright suggested that the bridge itself was not the issue, but that the real issue is Texas Road itself and being the only route on the east side of the creek to move traffic without going through the auditorium traffic. Mr. Wright stated that the Town has a good plan and should keep moving forward on the project.

- Reverend Eade Anderson, 517 Suwannee Drive, stated that with large projects there is a tendency to talk about the controversies, a testimony to the powers of distraction, and that people tend to forget about the good things that are happening. The bike path and walking path along Assembly Drive were both controversial, but turned out well, for which he expressed his appreciation.
- Suzanne McCaskill, 114 John Knox Road, asked for an explanation to statements that have been made in the community that the budget was balanced with an appropriation of \$325,000 from the Town's reserves.
- Steve Sewell, 143 Virginia Road, stated that Montreat is his home, and that he would like to celebrate the Town staff, particularly Chief Staggs and the tree work that was undertaken by the Public Works Department. He also noted that there was not a lot of turnover among the staff. Mr. Sewell appreciated that the Assembly Drive walking path was now wheelchair accessible and safe for bicyclists that he appreciates the sense of cooperation among the Town, College and Conference Center.

Mayor Taylor stated that the fund balance is intended to be used as a savings account, with funds accumulated to finance larger projects. The fund balance may rise or fall as needed from one year to the next to pay for capital projects. She referred everyone to the Capital Improvement Plan for a multi-year view on how the larger projects are planned and funded. Mayor Taylor also explained that the fund balance is available for emergencies. The State requires a minimum General Fund balance of 8% of budgeted expenditures, while the Town of Montreat has established a policy of maintaining a 35% minimum. This fiscal year, \$269,650 was allocated from the fund balance in order to help fund the Texas Road bridge and Texas Road improvement projects.

**Commissioner Communications**

Commissioner Campbell reported that the Landcare Committee met yesterday, and thanked Mr. Bill Seaman for his report. The beetles released on the hemlocks by the Post Office are tiny and very hard to see. She reported that a new pest, the Pine Bark Adelgid, may also be coming and she thanked the Landcare Committee for their work in protecting the trees of the Montreat valley. Commissioner Campbell noted that there are Montreat College student projects underway for educational signage for the hemlocks. The revisions to the Sign Ordinance were drafted by the Wayfinding Committee, a committee represented by all the major institutions and stakeholders in Montreat. The Presbyterian Heritage Center is working with the College to open an exhibit next week celebrating the College centennial.

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**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

Mayor Taylor reviewed the following list of upcoming meeting dates and deadlines:

<u>October Town Council Meeting:</u>	October 8, 2015, 7:00 p.m. Walkup Building
<u>Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting:</u>	October 22, 2015, 7:00 p.m. Walkup Building
<u>Bulk Item Sanitation Collection:</u>	October 27, 2015
<u>Audit Committee Meeting:</u>	October 29, 2015, 3:00 p.m. Town Services Building
<u>Agenda Items Due:</u>	October 30, 2015, 5:00 p.m. Town Services Office
<u>November Agenda Meeting:</u>	November 5, 2015, 7:00 p.m. Walkup Building
<u>November Town Council Meeting:</u>	November 12, 2015, 7:00 p.m. Walkup Building

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Commissioner Vinson moved to adjourn the Town Council Meeting. Commissioner McCaskill seconded and the motion carried 4/0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

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Letta Jean Taylor, Mayor

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Stefan Stackhouse, Deputy Town Clerk