

**Town of Montreat
Board of Commissioners
Town Council Public Forum
December 8, 2016
Walkup Building**

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

Board members absent: Mayor Tim Helms

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
David Arrant, Police Captain
David Currie, Code Administrator/Building Inspector
Steve Stackhouse, Finance Officer & Deputy Town Clerk

Call to Order

Approximately 18 people were in attendance. Mayor Pro Tem Fouche called the meeting to order at 6:32 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, stated that she is concerned about the Town of Montreat's plans for building a vehicular bridge on their own as suggested in the Bridge Committee Report. She is concerned that a bridge is not planned and wants to know why. She wants to know how and when the Committee plans to proceed. Mrs. Nichols would like an exit out of Montreat to insure public safety. She feels that it is the duty of elected officials to insure public safety. Mrs. Nichols referred to past projects such as the bicycle lane and the pedestrian walkway and how esthetics and emotion almost ruled these projects out. But the projects were carried out and everyone that uses the lanes appear to like them. Mrs. Nichols stated that a vote of no to a proposed vehicular bridge is a vote of no confidence in our safety personnel who know more about such matters.

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Mrs. Letta Jean Taylor of 386 Oklahoma Road, was involved in evacuation conversations during the Weed Lane Fires and more recently in South Carolina due to Hurricane Matthew. Mrs. Taylor pointed out that two vehicles cannot turn at the same time at Lookout Road and Assembly Drive. She feels that two lanes going out would evacuate people much quicker and easier than one lane. Mrs. Taylor would also like to see a bridge above the flood plain as well.

Mrs. Mary Nell Todd of 143 Eastminster Terrace, seconded the eloquently stated words of Mrs. Nichols and Mrs. Taylor. Mrs. Todd reflected on the recent tragedy in Gatlinburg, TN and commented on how easily a situation like that could happen in Montreat. Mrs. Todd feels that the Town of Montreat needs more exits rather than fewer ones. She feels that we need to plan for the worst and hope for the best and we cannot hide our heads in the sand and think that a widespread fire could not happen in Montreat like it did in Gatlinburg. Mrs. Todd stated that the Town needs to be more aggressive in looking after the safety of the townspeople and college students.

Mr. Joe Standaert of 118 Shenandoah Terrace, stated that the general public has never heard the Council discuss the 12 recommendations from the Bridge Committee nor did the Bridge Committee discuss their own findings in front of the public. Mr. Standaert also stated that the Board was not given the opportunity to ask questions or engage in open conversation with regards to the findings of the Bridge Committee.

Mrs. Martha Campbell of 149 Maryland Place, stated that she was concerned about the transparency in the Town Hall Committee meetings. Mrs. Campbell requested that the entire Town Hall Committee Report be included in the January Agenda Packet. She also felt that it would be a good idea if the Town Hall Committee presented their report publicly while giving everyone in attendance a chance to ask questions.

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 7:05 p.m.

Tim Helms, Mayor

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk