

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MONTREAT BRIDGE AESTHETICS
COMMITTEE TO THE MONTREAT TOWN COUNCIL

August 1, 2018

The Montreat Bridge Aesthetics Committee (the “Committee”) was formed to study and provide recommendations to the Montreat Town Council concerning the design and aesthetic features of the Texas Road Extension Bridge. The bridge is scheduled to be repaired and converted to a pedestrian bridge. Although the Committee’s primary charge was to make design and aesthetic recommendations, the Committee was required to make a preliminary assessment and analysis of the safety improvements and repairs to the bridge that will be required to arrive at its recommendations.

The Montreat Town Council initially appointed the following persons to serve as members of the Committee: Jane Alexander, Mason Blake, Randi Collie, Shannon Ingersoll, Robin Melvin, Walter Somerville and Robert Wynne. Robert Wynne resigned as a member of the Committee after its first meeting due to conflicts between the Committee’s meeting schedule and his prior commitments. After the first meeting, the Montreat Town Council appointed Kent Otto as an additional member of the Committee.

The initial and organizational meeting of the Committee was held on April 26, 2018. Subsequent meetings were held on May 24th, June 14th, July 10th, July 26th and August 1st. The following is a brief summary of each meeting of the Committee:

April 26, 2018 Meeting

A. Persons Attending

- Committee members present: Jane Alexander, Mason Blake, Randi Collie, Shannon Ingersoll, Robin Melvin and Walter Somerville
- Town staff present: Angie Murphy, Town Clerk
- Members of public attending: Kent Otto

B. Matters Discussed and Actions Taken

- Election of officers: Mason Blake was selected to be chairperson, Robin Melvin was selected to be vice-chairperson and Jane Alexander was selected to be secretary
- Rules and Procedures: The Committee adopted a proposed set of Rules and Procedures to govern its deliberations.
- Meeting Dates and Times Set: The Committee scheduled meetings on May 24th, June 14th, July 10th, July 26th, August 9th and the second Thursday of

each month thereafter if needed until the Committee had concluded its deliberations.

C. Committee Goals and Objectives

- The Committee agreed that its meetings and deliberations should encourage maximum public participation. Multiple meetings were scheduled in June and July to give summer residents the ability to provide input to the Committee's deliberations. Public comment was included as a part of every agenda. Announcements and publications concerning the Committee's meetings were authorized and encouraged. Pursuant to this decision, notifications concerning the Committee's meetings were published in the Montreat Cottagers Association newsletter, announced at the Montreat Cottagers Association meeting and sent on-line by the Town to subscribers of its "Sunshine List."
- The Committee also recognized that it was important to educate the public about the role of the Committee. The future function of the bridge as a pedestrian only bridge had already been decided and was not an issue before the Committee.
- The Committee reviewed the need to obtain input from the Town staff concerning various technical issues related to the current condition and needed repairs to the bridge, required safety improvements and the Town's budget for the project. The Committee decided to make these topics the focus of its May 24th meeting.

May 24, 2018 Meeting

A. Persons Attending

- Committee members present: Jane Alexander, Mason Blake, Robin Melvin, Kent Otto and Walter Somerville
- Town staff present: Alex Carmichael, Town Administrator, and Angie Murphy, Town Clerk
- Members of public attending: none

B. Public Discussion

- There were no members of the public present at the meeting. Mason Blake shared with the committee the stone bridge suggestions he received in the mail from Nancy Thomas. The materials received from Ms. Thomas included pictures, a sketch and other materials. Robin Melvin suggested that the Committee solicit the advice and participation of members of the public who have expertise that could assist the Committee's deliberations. The Committee concluded that was a good suggestion and encouraged members to do so.

C. Matters Discussed and Actions Taken

- The Committee again discussed the importance of public involvement, and of the Committee being open, transparent, welcoming of public input and respectful of all views and suggestions. Mason Blake reported that he prepared an article concerning the Committee's meetings that was submitted for publication in the Montreat Cottagers Association newsletter.
- The Town Administrator reviewed the results of the 2017 Texas Road Bridge Inspection Report prepared by KCI Associates of NC ("KCI"), an engineering firm that had been engaged by the Town, and an Executive Summary of the Inspection Report and Recommendations for Maintenance Repairs prepared by the Town staff. KCI has determined that the bridge structure in its current condition can support pedestrian loading. Safety concerns that need to be addressed are (i) installing new pedestrian bridge rails, (ii) correcting the current uneven bridge surface, (iii) installing bollards to prevent vehicles from using the bridge, and (iv) design features to direct traffic to the center of the bridge and away from the structurally compromised edges of the bridge. Although the bridge is in fair condition and has a remaining useful life of 20 years, structural concerns, particularly the structurally compromised 3 1/2' edge of the timbers along each side of the bridge, must be addressed as well as safety concerns.
- The Town administrator explained that the budget for the project in the current budget would be \$20,000.00. The Committee discussed the possibility of raising additional funds for the bridge project through private donations if the recommended improvements exceeded the Town's budget.
- The Committee discussed preliminary ideas and suggestions concerning the aesthetic aspects of the bridge. The possible use of planters and landscaping were discussed, with reference the bridge at Lake Lure as an example of this approach. A possible covered bridge was discussed and examples of this approach in other communities were noted. The style and design of other pedestrian wood bridges in Montreat were discussed.
- The Committee decided that before proceeding further to discuss the design of the bridge, more information regarding the required repair of the bridge was needed. The Committee decided that the members would take tours, two at a time, of the bridge with Public Works Director Barry Creasman. Pursuant to this discussion, each member of the Committee met with Barry Creasman to inspect the bridge and its condition between the May 24th meeting and the June 14th meeting of the Committee.

June 14, 2018 Meeting

A. Persons Attending

- Committee members present: Jane Alexander, Mason Blake, Randi Collie, Shannon Ingersoll, Robin Melvin, Kent Otto and Walter Somerville
- Town staff present: Alex Carmichael, Town Administrator, and Barry Creasman, Town Public Works Director
- Members of public attending: Peggy Scheu, Tom Frist, Suzanne Sloan, Sam Sloan, Margaret Bauer, George Sanger and Hugh Alexander

B. Public Discussion

- Peggy Scheu indicated she wanted to ensure the Town's budget was adhered to and was concerned that any plantings and landscaping recommended were appropriate to the growing conditions and did not result in significant maintenance costs.
- Tom Frist stated that he favored a covered bridge that would be accompanied by seating areas on the bridge, pots with plants at various location and a small park area with seating and picnic tables on the Town's land located west of the bridge. He suggested using wood and stone materials. He presented a conceptual drawing of the bridge he proposed and proposed the name "Shalom Bridge."
- Sam and Suzanne Sloan agreed with the concept of a covered bridge and stated that it would be an attractive addition to the community.
- Margaret Bauer also agrees that a covered bridge would be a very attractive design for the bridge.
- George Sawyer expressed his support for the concept of a covered bridge.
- Hugh Alexander indicated he liked the covered bridge and other concepts articulated by Tom Frist, including the use of wood and stone materials and design elements.
- Emailed suggestions received from Patti Pyle (using birdhouses as a design element) and Bruce Burdett (suggesting a covered bridge, with benches along the sides, landscaping, and brick paving of the pathways leading up to the bridge) were also discussed.

C. Matters Discussed and Actions Taken

- Several members of the Committee, including Jane Alexander and Robin Melvin, expressed their support for a covered bridge design. Randi Collie shared various pictures of a covered pedestrian bridge in another community and pointed out design elements that were incorporated in that bridge. Other members of the Committee remarked that using the design elements of stone and wood would be attractive and reflect the character of Montreat. It was noted that the bridge could be a major visual landmark in Montreat, and that a small park area next to the bridge would provide a location for informal

gatherings and to view the activities on Welch Field. The Committee discussed the possibility of constructing the bridge in two phases. The first phase would include at a minimum the required structural repairs and safety improvements. The second phase would include design and aesthetic elements and improvements that cost in excess of the Town's \$20,000 budget.

- The Committee discussed their bridge inspections and related discussions with Barry Creasman, and discussed repair alternatives. An important factor is avoiding obtaining a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ("ACOE") in connection with the bridge repairs. Obtaining an ACOE permit would cause inordinate delay and expense. Thus, the bridge repair strategy adopted must not require an ACOE permit. Shannon Ingersoll pointed out that the repair strategy adopted must also be cognizant of repairs that will be required in approximately 20 years to the head wall and wing walls of the bridge.
- The Committee discussed several possible approaches and combinations thereof to the bridge project. These included (i) building a "bridge over the bridge" or "floating bridge" to eliminate the need to repair the existing bridge surface and/or timbers, (ii) cutting down the sides of the existing timbers, which are structurally degraded, reducing the current width of the bridge to the width of the outside steel beams, and (iii) resurfacing the current bridge (including replacing the existing timbers on top of the steel beams if that could be done without obtaining an ACOE permit). The Committee also noted that costs could be saved if the repairs could be completed using the Town's public works crew instead of an outside contractor.
- The Committee determined that it could not move forward with a discussion of recommendations until more was known concerning the amount and type of repair work that could be accomplished without an ACOE permit. Alex Carmichael was asked to have further discussions with KCI to determine the extent of the repair work to the bridge that could be accomplished without an ACOE permit.

July 10, 2018 Meeting

A. Persons Attending

- Committee members present: Jane Alexander, Mason Blake, Robin Melvin, Kent Otto and Walter Somerville
- Town staff present: none
- Members of public: Laura Spangler, Judy Gregory and Scott Gregory

B. Public Discussion

- Laura Spangler expressed her desire for the bridge to be strictly pedestrian and indicated she liked the concept of a covered bridge.

- Scott Gregory suggested that the Town utilize the existing bridge structure to the extent reasonably possible. He indicated his support for a covered bridge design.

C. Matters Discussed and Actions Taken

- Mason Blake reported on his meeting with Alex Carmichael, who was unable to attend the Committee's meeting due to a conference he was attending. Alex had spoken with KCI regarding the repair of the bridge and what repairs could be accomplished without the need for an ACOE permit. He reported that the approximate 3 1/2' edge of the timbers along each side of the bridge can be removed without obtaining an ACOE permit. KCI also indicated that all of the timbers on top of the steel beams can be removed without the need for an ACOE permit. Alex indicated, however, that due to the current heavy workload of the public works department staff, it might be more appropriate for an outside contractor to make the bridge repairs. The design of the bridge which is adopted and the timetable for the repairs will impact the ability of the Town staff to do the work. Alex also indicated he had received a favorable response to his inquiry to the UNC School of Government concerning the ability to raise private funds to pay for the cost of the bridge project if it exceeded the Town's budget. The Committee discussed asking the Montreat Cottagers Association to form a "Friends of the Montreat Bridge Committee." The Friends of the Montreat Bridge Committee would provide a fundraising vehicle for members of the community who desire to raise funds to pay for bridge improvements that exceed the Town's budget. Walter Somerville noted that the community had the ability to create another "landmark" for Montreat, but that this would cost substantially more than the Town's \$20,000 budget.
- The Committee then discussed a schedule for concluding its deliberations and recommendations. The Committee will continue to obtain public input and suggestions at its meeting on July 26th. At that meeting, the Committee will begin discussions concerning, and attempt to reach preliminary agreement on, a report and recommendations to the Town Council concerning the bridge and related improvements. The Committee will endeavor to adopt a final report and recommendation to the Town Council at its meeting on August 9th.

July 26, 2018 Meeting

A. Persons Attending

- Committee members present: Jane Alexander, Mason Blake, Randi Collie, Shannon Ingersoll, Robin Melvin, Kent Otto and Walter Somerville
- Town staff present: Alex Carmichael, Town Administrator, and Angie Murphy, Town Clerk
- Members of public: Amy Blake, John Hinkle and Tom Frist

B. Public Discussion

- Members of the public did not have any comments to make during the public discussion portion of the meeting. Tom Frist and John Hinkle did offer some comments during the Committee's later discussions.

C. Matters Discussed and Actions Taken

- In further discussions regarding structural and safety improvements, Randi Collie noted she had concerns about locating seating on the bridge and suggested seating be limited to the proposed park area. In further discussion about structural improvements, Shannon Ingersoll noted that the construction plans should take into consideration the remaining life of, and future need to replace, the headwalls and wing walls.
- In further discussion of potential aesthetic improvements, Walter Somerville circulated a picture of a covered walking bridge with open sides and various wood and stone design elements. Numerous positive comments concerning the design of this bridge were made by those in attendance. Randi Collie circulated a picture of the design of the beams at the entry of the Chapel of the Prodigal and suggested this type of design could be replicated on the bridge. Numerous positive comments concerning this suggestion were made by those in attendance.
- The Committee discussed a draft outline of recommendations to the Town Council regarding the construction and design of the bridge. Numerous suggestions and comments were made by various Committee members. As part of the recommendation, the Committee suggests the bridge project be separated conceptually into two phases, with the first phase including needed safety and structural improvements and the second phase including (i) a roof (with supporting columns) for the bridge, (ii) stone and design elements that could not be included in the Town's initial budget, and (iii) a park area on the west side of the bridge. Robin Melvin suggested that if fundraising efforts for phase two were successful early on, the bridge could be constructed in a single phase. The Committee agreed that this would be the best approach if it is feasible.
- The Committee discussed a draft Report to the Town Council that will incorporate its recommendations. The Committee also discussed providing a preliminary verbal report to the community at the Montreat Cottagers, Inc. meeting scheduled for August 4, 2018. The Committee agreed to schedule an additional meeting on August 2, 2018 to finalize approval of a recommendation to the Town Council in advance of the Council's meeting on August 9, 2018. Finally, there was general discussion of possible fundraising strategies for phase two of the bridge, with John Hinkle offering several very excellent suggestions.

August 1, 2018 Meeting

A. Persons Attending

- Committee members present: Jane Alexander, Mason Blake, Randi Collie, Shannon Ingersoll, Robin Melvin, Kent Otto and Walter Somerville
- Town staff present: Angie Murphy, Town Clerk
- Members of public: Emory Underwood, Ashton Phelps and Mary Standaert

B. Public Discussion

- Members of the public did not have any comments.

C. Matters Discussed and Actions Taken

- Mason Blake reported that he spoke with both Mayor Helms and Righton McCallum regarding the Committee making a report of its deliberations to the community at the Montreat Cottagers meeting on August 4, 2018. Neither had any objection.
- The Committee discussed a revised draft of its Report to the Town Council that incorporated its recommendations. Robin Melvin suggested adding a statement recommending that the Town Council consider including funding for any unfunded portion of the first phase or the second phase of the bridge project in its budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020 (and if needed later years). The Committee agreed with this suggestion. The Committee unanimously approved the report and recommendations of the Montreat Bridge Aesthetics Committee with this revision.
- Various aspects of the presentation and report to be given at both the Cottagers Association and Town Council meetings were discussed. The Committee, having concluded its assigned duties, determined that it would not meet on August 9, 2018.

Final Recommendations

Based on the foregoing meetings and deliberations, the Montreat Bridge Aesthetics Committee respectfully submits the following recommendations to the Montreat Town Council:

1. The Committee recommends the existing Texas Road bridge be reconstructed as a covered pedestrian bridge with wood and stone design elements and open sides. The concept of a covered bridge was suggested and strongly supported by members of the public that appeared before the Committee. The Committee believes the covered bridge will be a project that unifies the community and adds a significant new landmark feature to the Montreat landscape.
2. Due to the amount of funding included in the 2018-2019 Town budget (i.e., \$20,000.00), the Committee recommends the bridge project be separated, at

least conceptually, into two phases. The first phase would use the current 2018-2019 Town budget of \$20,000.00 to (a) design and estimate the cost of both phases, and (b) construct the first phase.

3. The Committee recommends the first phase of construction utilize the existing bridge structure to the extent reasonably possible. The Committee advises the Town Council that the engineer, in designing the project, will need to consider the useful life of, and need to repair or replace in the future, the existing headwalls and wingwalls of the bridge. The Committee also advises the Town Council that a structural engineer may need to be consulted in the design process.
4. The Committee recommends that the first phase of construction make needed structural improvements to the bridge. The first phase would include either (a) removing the approximate 3 1/2' edge of the timbers along each side of the bridge (to the edge of the underlying steel beams), and then resurfacing the top of the remaining portion of the timbers, or (b) removing all of the existing timbers along the top surface of the bridge and install new narrower timbers in their place. A more expensive alternative that would not utilize the existing structure as extensively would be to construct a "bridge over the bridge," with new supporting structures being installed.
5. The Committee recommends that the first phase of construction also include needed safety improvements to the bridge. These include resurfacing the bridge, installing a handrail along each side of the bridge, installing bollards to prevent vehicular traffic on the bridge, and installing design elements directing pedestrian traffic onto the bridge.
6. The Committee recommends that the Town Council combine the first phase of construction and the second phase of construction if a fundraising effort for the second phase (which is discussed below) raises the funds needed for construction of the second phase within a time frame that allows combining the two phases. The Committee also recommends that the Town Council consider including funding for any unfunded portion of the first phase or the second phase of the bridge project in its budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020 (and if needed later years).
7. The Committee recommends that the second phase of construction include (a) a cover/roof over bridge, (b) a small park area in the area west of the bridge, and (c) design elements and features that cannot be included in the first phase due to budgetary constraints. In creating the design for the bridge and park area, the installation of appropriate seating should be considered, and the incorporation of appropriate, low-maintenance landscaping/plantings and/or stone features at or near the entrance to the bridge should be considered. An "Arts and Crafts" or similar design theme consistent with Montreat architectural styles should be utilized.
8. Both phases of construction should use wood and stone as materials and design elements. Careful attention should be given to these design elements. The Committee has attached to its report pictures of bridges in other localities that reflect the type of design and design detail favored by the Committee. Sketches

and materials submitted to the Committee by members of the public are also attached to the Committee's report.

9. The Town Council should enter into discussions with a Friends of the Montreat Bridge Committee, assuming the same is formed under the auspices of the Montreat Cottagers, Inc. or another community organization. It is contemplated that the Friends of the Montreat Bridge Committee and the Town would enter a donation agreement under the terms of which the committee would raise funds for all or a significant portion of the cost of constructing the second phase of the bridge. Naming rights, the installation of plaques and memorials, and other matters relevant to fundraising would be incorporated in the donation agreement. Under the terms of the donation agreement, the Friends of the Montreat Bridge Committee would also advise and consult with the Town Council concerning the design of each phase of the bridge.

Respectfully submitted to the Town Council by the members of the Montreat Bridge Aesthetics Committee this 1st day of August, 2018.

Jane Alexander
Mason Blake
Randi Collie
Shannon Ingersoll
Robin Melvin
Kent Otto
Walter Somerville