Board members present: Mayor Tim Helms

Mayor Pro Tem Kent Otto

Commissioner Kitty Fouche

Commissioner Bill Gilliland

Commissioner Alice Lentz

Commissioner Tom Widmer

Board members absent: none

Town staff present: Alex Carmichael, Town Administrator

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

Approximately 15 members of the public were also present. Mayor Helms called the Public Forum to order at 6:30 p.m., and held a moment of silence.

**Agenda Approval**

Commissioner Gilliland moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Public Forum**

Mr. Bill Hollins of 116 Shenandoah Terrace wanted to talk about an invasive plant in the Community. Mr. Hollins complimented the great roadside maintenance that Public Work Crews do every day in Montreat. Mr. Hollins then went on to discuss pampas grass (Chinese Silvergrass) which is spread throughout the Town of Montreat. Mr. Hollins previously provided an email to the Commission outlining this problem. This is an invasive plant that is difficult to eradicate. Some people consider it ornamental but in the fall it generates many seeds which scatter. Mr. Hollins would like to take the Public Work Crews on a tour throughout Town to find a way to control the grass.

Mrs. Martha Campbell of 149 Maryland Place thanked Mr. Hollins for coming to the Landcare Committee to express his concern. A combination of people in Landcare have been researching this matter. Mrs. Campbell brought a poster of native grasses that could be planted in lieu of pampas grass. Mrs. Campbell discussed with Landcare the possibility of including native grasses in next year’s Native Plant Sale. She also mentioned that Instructor Josh Holbrook said his spring environmental studies students may be given a project to dig some pampas grass up. She also stated that the herbicide in Roundup could eradicate the pampas grass but Roundup is something that the Town tries to avoid.

 Mr. Tom Frist of 98 Frist Road also mentioned another “menace”: Japanese Knotweed. Mr. Frist thanked the Commission for the upcoming Town Hall Public Input Session.

Ms. Sally Stansill of 141 Holston Lane spoke about the constant flow of traffic through the Gate. Ms. Stansill expressed her concern about the noise level coming through the Gate. She stated she can hear squealing breaks and thumping of radios from inside her home on Holston Lane. Ms. Stansill can hear trucks approaching way down Montreat Road. This noise makes Ms. Stansill anxious and negatively affects her mental well-being. Ms. Stansill feels that all cars and trucks entering Montreat should abide by the noise ordinance as not to disturb homeowners and visitors. Ms. Stansill also mentioned a metallic grinding noise around the area of Assembly Drive which she believes is coming from Town Employees. She questioned what the noise is and when it will ever end. Mayor Helms stated the grading/grinding noise was from the site preparation for the new Public Works Building behind MRA’s maintenance building. Mr. Carmichael advised that the grading and hauling of gravel is complete. He also mentioned the wood chipped goes around once a week from house to house grinding up limbs and brush and this could be what Ms. Stansill is hearing.

Ms. Debbie Ferguson with Montreat College announced two upcoming events at the College. The first is the annual cybersecurity conference “Retreat” which will bring over 300 people to the campus. She also invited everyone to attend the annual Christmas Concert on December 1st.

Mrs. Martha Campbell of 149 Maryland Place had a comment related to the scheduling of elections and whether to have them on even or odd years. Mrs. Campbell would like to have the Town’s non-partisan election held on a year when a partisan election is not being held. Mrs. Campbell encourages the Commission to stay with odd years for Town elections. She feels the additional costs are very minor compared to the benefits we would receive as a Town.

Mr. Tom Frist of 98 Frist Road stated that Montreators do not run as democrats or republicans Montreators run as friends.

Commissioner Kitty Fouche feels that there are positive and negatives to the election discussion.

Mrs. Mary Knight of 336 Chapman Road and 159 Virginia Road questioned the plan for repairing the point on Assembly Drive next to the Lookout Road Bridge where the bank is eroding badly and breaking the pavement. Mayor Helms stated that the Town would have to work with the Army Corps of Engineers but it is a slow process. Mr. Carmichael also advised that the project is on the Town’s radar and although it has eroded it is secure for awhile.

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Fouche moved to adjourn the Public Forum. Commissioner Widmer seconded and the meeting was adjourned 5/0 at 6:58 p.m.

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Tim Helms, Mayor Angie Murphy, Town Clerk