

**Town of Montreat
Board of Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Meeting**

Board members present: None

Board members present via
Zoom:

Mayor Tim Helms
Mayor Pro Tem Kent Otto
Commissioner Kitty Fouche
Commissioner Jane Alexander
Commissioner Tom Widmer
Commissioner Alice Lentz

Board members absent: None

Town staff present via Zoom: Alex Carmichael, Town Administrator
Angie Murphy, Town Clerk
David Arrant, Chief of Police
Darlene Carrasquillo, Finance Officer
Barry Creasman, Public Works Director

No members of the public were present at Town Hall but several were watching via Zoom. Mayor Helms called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and led the group in the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence.

Agenda Approval

Commissioner Alexander moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Lentz seconded and the motion carried 5/0. All Commissioners voted via roll call.

Montreat Address and Zip Code Update

Commissioner Kitty Fouche and Commissioner Tom Widmer presented a very detailed report on the Montreat Address and Zip Code issue. After much investigation on their part it seems that this issue is a multi-faceted, extremely complicated problem. It involves numerous layers of technology and a variety of people and organizations.

Commissioners Fouche and Widmer met with Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) and were told it was not only a geographic problem but a bureaucratic problem as well. ESRI associates recommended working with the Postal Office and Buncombe County. The Commissioners also met with EMS/911 Services and the local Fire Chief who discussed that the new EMS/911 features were to go into effect on November 4th but it has since been delayed. The Commissioners feel certain that Montreat will be accurately represented after talking to local representatives.

Commissioners Fouche and Widmer spoke with the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services for Buncombe County to discuss the lack of COVID-19 reporting in Montreat. The main reasons that Montreat's data seems to be suppressed is that our population is too small to maintain confidentiality and zip code 28757 has a population of 0 and data cannot be reported on a population of that number.

The Commissioners feel that the Post Office is at the heart of the Zip Code issue. Tim Bryson, our Postmaster, spent many hours, even on his own time, to link each of our physical addresses to our PO Boxes. With the information complete, he sent it to Charlotte to our regional USPS. He was told that the information he compiled could not be entered into the system because PO boxes are not permanently tied to a residence. If a Montreat resident moves, the PO Box is assigned to someone else at another address. The Commissioners are hoping to get a meeting with Senators Burr and Tillis as well as with US Representative McHenry to help navigate the geographic and bureaucratic issues.

Next Commissioners Fouche and Widmer plan to meet with the GIS Coordinator at Buncombe County. This individual is well aware of Montreat's situation and has been working on it for the last decade. The Commissioners hope he can suggest possible next steps they can pursue.

Commissioners Fouche and Widmer thanked the previous Council Members and Commissioner Alice Lentz who worked on the addressing issues prior to their attempts. The Commissioners ask for the Community to be patient and discouraged independent investigations which might muddy the waters. They have already encountered people who are experiencing "Montreat Address Fatigue".

Mayor's Communications

Mayor Helms wished the community a Merry Christmas. Mayor Helms thanked the Administrative Staff, Public Works Crews, the Police Department, Montreat Firewise, Montreat Landcare, Montreat Tree Board, the Planning & Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment and the Audit Committee for all of their work for the good of Montreat. Mayor Helms thanked the "Gardeners of Weedin" for the Christmas decorations and for the recent bulb plantings. Mayor Helms looks forward to a better 2021 for all.

Meeting Minutes Adoption

- November 12th Town Council Public Forum Meeting Minutes
- November 12th Town Council Meeting Minutes

Town Administrator's Communications

Mr. Carmichael had no communications to report.

Administrative Reports

- Administration – This report was given in written format.
- Planning & Zoning – This report was given in written format.
- Police – This report was given in written format.
- Public Works and Water – This report was given in written format.
- Finance – No report provided.
- Sanitation – This report was given in written format.
- Streets – This report was given in written format.

Commissioner Fouche and Commissioner Widmer thanked the Staff for their comparative reports. Commissioner Widmer noted that there was no Finance report and with the effects of COVID-19 it is important for the commission to stay on-top-of of the Town's financial situation. Finance Officer Darlene Carrasquillo provided the Commission with an oral report. She stated that income was actually better than what was budgeted and tax revenues, from all sources, are better than expected. Ms. Carrasquillo also gave the Commission an update on the recent audit process in which the Town is currently undergoing.

Public Comment

Town Clerk Angie Murphy read a comment provided by Dr. Mary Standaert of 118 Shenandoah Terrace. Dr. Standaert stated that with our Zoom technology the Town should allow citizen comments to be sent to the chat room seen by the public and be read at the public comment time by the Town Clerk.

Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

- A. Oath of Office for Mayor Tim Helms: Mayor Tim Helms took the Oath of Office for the position of Mayor of the Town of Montreat.
- B. Oath of Office for Commissioner Kitty Fouche: Commissioner Kitty Fouche took the Oath of Office as Commissioner for the Town of Montreat.
- C. Oath of Office for Commissioner Jane Alexander: Commissioner Jane Alexander took the Oath of Office as Commissioner for the Town of Montreat.

- D. Election of Mayor Pro Tempore: Commissioner Fouche recognized and thanked Mayor Pro Tem Kent Otto for his service during the past three years. Commissioner Fouche nominated Commissioner Tom Widmer for the position of Mayor Pro Tem. Commissioner Alice Lentz seconded and the motion carried 5/0.
- E. Offer of Employment for Patrol Officer Jon McDonald: Mayor Pro Tem Widmer moved to approve a conditional offer of employment to Patrol Officer Jon McDonald in the amount of \$37,754 per year. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and by roll call the motion carried 5/0.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment at this time.

Commissioner Communications

Commissioner Alice Lentz thanked Montreat Landcare for all of their hard work in a difficult year. Martha Campbell has stepped down from a two-year term and Grace Nichols will be filling her shoes in Landcare beginning in January. Commissioner Lentz also mentioned that next month we will be hearing more about the Mayor's Monarch Pledge.

Dates to Remember

- Montreat Landcare January 6, 2021 9:00 a.m. Location/Method to be determined
- Planning & Zoning Commission January 7, 2020 10:30 a.m. Location/Method to be determined
- Tree Board January 26, 2020 9:30 a.m. Location/Method to be determined

Adjournment

Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Tim Helms, Mayor

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

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