Board members present: Mayor Tim Helms

Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer

Commissioner Kitty Fouche

Commissioner Alice Lentz

Commissioner Kent Otto

Commissioner Jane Alexander

Board members absent: None

Town staff present: Alex Carmichael, Town Administrator

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

Susan Taylor Rash, Town Attorney

Approximately 28 members of the public were present. Mayor Helms called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., and led the group in a moment of silence.

**Agenda Approval**

Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Public Forum**

Clary Phipps of 106 John Knox Road wanted to make sure the Council knew how she felt about Montreat. Mrs. Phipps mentioned past controversies that rocked the valley: the Montreat College parking lot, church problems, the Town Hall and Wynne-Lithia Springs. Mrs. Phipps suggested that the Galax House be turned into a memorial for Reverend Billy Graham. Mrs. Phipps stated that she has peace in her heart but wants to see peace in her valley.

Dr. Mary Standaert of 118 Shenandoah Terrace had questions about the FY 2021-2022 budget. Dr. Standaert expressed her concerns about a second year with a tax increase. She stated it would be a de facto increase because of the increased tax assessments. Dr. Standaert urged the Commission to consider a tax neutral budget by rolling back from 42 cents to 41 cents.

Grace Nichols of 527 Suwannee Drive read a written comment by Meredith Greene of 130 Kanawha Drive. Ms. Greene joined an informal group of volunteers to address weeding at the new Town Hall but soon realized she’s now the only volunteer. She felt it should not be a job of the people and wondered if there would be any allocation in the budget for maintenance of Town Hall grounds.

Bryant McEntire of 304 Georgia Terrace thanked the Commission for their often thankless jobs but urged them to consider protections for the future. Mr. McEntire also thanked the Planning & Zoning Commission for their work on the zoning ordinance review but felt there was more work to be done. Mr. McEntire suggested requiring an environmental impact study as well as requiring fiscal impact assessments.

John Ellington of 196 Harmony Lane (formerly of 123 John Knox Road) felt that the Town of Montreat does not keep adequate records and recommended permanent record retention. Mr. Ellington also felt that building permits were unnecessarily hard to get approved. He also requested that something should happen with his building permit request.

Mike Sonnenberg of 125 Virginia Road mentioned that long term residents, David and Susan Holcomb, were moving out of the community and wished there was some way that they could be thanked. Mr. Sonnenberg also requested prayer for his son Joel who will undergo a major operation later on this month.

Robert Warner of 346 Chapman Road referenced Cool Hand Luke in his comment. He said there seems to be a failure to communicate with regards to the lodge project. Mr. Warner stated that the MRA has done a lot of listening but not a lot of communicating. He stated that people have tried to engage the MRA with meaningful dialogue without success. Mr. Warner believes there are alternatives to the lodge plan. He feels we are heading to the court system for resolution.

Nancy Fox of 314 N Carolina Terrace thanked the commission for their hard work. Ms. Fox stated that the Galax House, Chester Lord Apartments and Chestnut Lodge provided affordable lodging for Montreat guests. Ms. Fox urged the Town Council to add language to the zoning ordinance so that zoning and permitting decisions give strong consideration for historic preservation.

Martha Campbell of 149 Maryland Place advised the Council of the Stream Team Volunteers. Their group meets on Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. at the Swimming Hole and they need volunteers to “dip and drive”. The Stream Team is funded by Mountain True Program they meet rain or shine to test for e-coli in the water! Call Martha for more details!

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Jane Alexander moved to adjourn the meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Widmer seconded and the motion carried 5/0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Tim Helms, Mayor Angie Murphy, Town Clerk