

**Town of Montreat  
Board of Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
March 10, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.  
Zoom Meeting with in person attendance**

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Board members present: Mayor Tim Helms  
Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer  
Commissioner Jane Alexander  
Commissioner Mason Blake  
Commissioner Kitty Fouche  
Commissioner Kent Otto

Board members present via  
Zoom: None

Board members absent: None

Town staff present: Ben Blackburn, Interim Town Administrator  
Angie Murphy, Town Clerk  
David Arrant, Chief of Police  
Gin Johnson, Police Officer  
Barry Creasman, Public Works Director  
Darlene Carrasquillo, Finance Officer

Town staff present via Zoom: None

Approximately nine members of the public were present at Town Hall and several more were watching via Zoom. Mayor Tim 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**

Mayor Tim Helms asked on behalf of Staff for Item F (Budget Amendment #6) to be dropped from the agenda. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer moved to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Mayor's Communications**

Mayor Tim Helms asked everyone to remember Ed Teters in their thoughts and prayers as his wife

Martha passed this week. Mr. Teters was a long time reserve Police Officer with the Town of Montreat. Mayor Helms advised that with the winter forecast this weekend it was imperative for people to move their cars off of the roadway because it would make plowing hard and unsafe. Mayor Helms also asked Public Works Director Barry Creasman about some upcoming tree removal work on Assembly Drive. Mr. Creasman advised that Assembly Drive will be closed to traffic Monday thru Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with detours clearly set up and marked for drivers. Mr. Creasman and his crews will be removing 30-35 diseased or dying trees from the Town of Montreat's tree inventory.

### **Meeting Minutes Adoption**

- February 10<sup>th</sup> Town Council Public Forum Meeting Minutes
- February 10<sup>th</sup> Town Council Meeting Minutes

### **Interim Town Administrator's Communications**

Mayor Helms took a moment to introduce Ben Blackburn as Interim Town Administrator and stated that Mr. Blackburn had good things to say about the Staff.

### **Administrative Reports**

- Administration – This report was given in written format.
- Finance – 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.
- Sanitation – This report was given in written format.
- Streets – This report was given in written format.

Mayor Helms advised that he was asked a question during Public Forum about how much money had been spent on the MRA's Special Use Permit hearing with regards to attorney fees and Staff had advised during the break that it was closer to \$74,000 in various fees.

### **Public Comment**

Mrs. Martha Campbell of 149 Maryland Place stated that Buncombe County was allocated 50.7 million through the coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. RFQ's were sent out to all municipalities and in the first round \$23.1 million was awarded to 27 projects in the county. Now round two has been advertised with \$27.6 million available, including funds to non-profits and public organizations. Mrs. Campbell encourages the Town and Council to be represented virtually at the funding workshop on Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup> to discover what projects might be presented for grants from these funds.

**Old Business**

There was no Old Business to discuss.

**New Business**

- A. Discussion of Flat Creek Crossing Accessibility Trail: Grace Nichols and Patti Pyle presented a proposal on behalf of Montreat Landcare Committee to establish and maintain a handicap accessible trail along Flat Creek near the Montreat Gate. Landcare would be responsible for the entire scope of the project, including funding, from start to finish. Mayor Helms took a brief poll of the Commission to gauge their willingness to support the project and everyone was in favor of Landcare moving forward with an engineer to answer some preliminary questions. Landcare will return next month with additional information.
  
- B. Consideration of Resolution of Intent regarding Council-Manager form of Government: The discussion of switching the form of Government to Council-Manager continued this month. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer questioned to whom the Manager would report to and Mr. Blackburn advised that he/she would report to the entire Council. Mr. Blackburn then asked the Council to consider a resolution to set a public hearing for Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. or soon thereafter. Mr. Blackburn stated it would be called for a vote on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer moved to approve the resolution of intent as presented. Commissioner Kitty Fouche seconded and the motion carried 5/0.
  
- C. Discussion of Texas Road Bridge Improvements Re: Phase 1 & Application for Phase 2 Grant: Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer stated that in this year's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) the Council budgeted \$102,000 to complete phase one of a two phase project for the Texas Road Pedestrian Bridge. The first phase is primarily structural and Town Staff recently released a RFP (request for proposals) for this stage. The second phase will be more aesthetic in nature. Mayor Pro Tem Widmer advised that there is a possibility that the Town of Montreat could get funding for phase two from a portion of money given to the local French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization. The Town of Montreat would have to contribute 20% of the funds. The application process appears to be relatively easy but the funds will not be available until 2027. Commissioner Mason Blake moved to submit an application as outlined by Ben Blackburn and Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer and schedule a vote at the next meeting with a resolution of intent committing 20% of the total amount from the Town. Commissioner Kitty Fouche seconded and the motion carried 5/0.
  
- D. Consideration of Hunting Dog Ordinance: Commissioner Mason Blake moved to defer action on the Consideration of the Hunting Dog Ordinance this evening but set a public hearing or meeting inviting members of the Mt. Mitchell Bear Hunting Club, the MRA and the NC Wildlife

Commission to discuss the proposed changes. Commissioner Blake briefly summarized the ordinance he had drafted. Commissioner Jane Alexander seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

- E. Consideration of Adding/Removing Signatures from First Bank Checking Accounts:  
Commissioner Kent Otto moved to add Interim Town Administrator Ben Blackburn and to remove Alex Carmichael and Darlene Carrasquillo from First Bank Checking Accounts. Commissioner Mason Blake seconded and the motion carried 5/0.
- F. Consideration of Setting FY2022-2023 Budget Work Session Dates: Interim Town Administrator Ben Blackburn advised that Department Heads were meeting now regarding their budgetary needs. Mayor Helms asked Town Clerk Angie Murphy to send the Council some dates in mid-April to begin the budget work session process.

### **Public Comment**

There were no further Public Comments.

### **Commissioner Communications**

There were no Commissioner Communications.

### **Dates to Remember**

- Special Board of Adjustment Meeting, Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. in the Town Hall and by Zoom Software
- Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting, Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in the Town Hall and by Zoom Software
- Board of Adjustment Meeting, Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. in the Town Hall and by Zoom Software
- Montreat Tree Board Meeting, Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. in the Town Hall with in person attendance and by Zoom software
- Montreat Landcare Committee, Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. in the Town Hall with in person attendance and by Zoom Software
- Planning & Zoning Commission, Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. in the Town Hall with in person attendance and by Zoom Software
- Town Council Meeting, Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall with in person attendance and by Zoom Software. The Public Forum will begin at 6:30 p.m.

### **Adjournment**

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Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

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Tim Helms , Mayor

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Angie Murphy, Town Clerk