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

Barry Creasman, Public Works Director

Darlene Carrasquillo, Finance Officer

Town staff present via Zoom: None

Approximately six 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**

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

**Mayor’s Communications**

Mayor Tim Helms reiterated his comments regarding attorney fees that he made during the Public Forum. The Town will have spent between $121,555 and $124,555 in attorney fees on the hotel SUP matter. This included an estimated $7,000 - $10,000 for potential Superior Court attorney fees in the case of an appeal which appears to be forthcoming.

**Meeting Minutes Adoption**

* March 10th Town Council Public Forum Meeting Minutes
* March 10th Town Council Meeting Minutes

**Interim Town Administrator’s Communications**

Interim Town Administrator Ben Blackburn briefly took a moment to report on the two grant applications the Town of Montreat submitted for the Texas Road Bridge funding. This included Buncombe County COVID ARPA funds and the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization grant program.

**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.

Commissioner Kent Otto asked Public Works Director Barry Creasman about the Texas Road Culvert below the Swimming Pool. Mr. Creasman reported that he’s in communication with an engineer from Civil Design Concepts who is awaiting results on the gabion baskets.

Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer asked Public Works Director Barry Creasman if it is proper for the Texas Road Bridge to be used as a walking bridge. Mr. Creasman advised that in June 2020 the bridge was registered with the NCDOT as a pedestrian bridge and at that time it was closed to vehicular traffic. Mr. Creasman also advised that all ratings and subsequent inspection reports lists it as a pedestrian bridge.

Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer questioned Police Chief David Arrant about the 62% decrease from last year in traffic stops. Chief Arrant responded by saying that there is a lack of certified radar operators along with other factors.

**Public Comment**

There were no Public Comments at this time.

**Old Business**

There was no Old Business to discuss.

**New Business**

1. Consideration of Public Hearing regarding Change of Town of Montreat Charter from Mayor/Council to Council/Manager Form of Government: Mayor Helms opened the Public Hearing for comments regarding the issue. Wade Burns of 211 Virginia Road stated that the current form of government has many issues and that by switching to Council/Manager it could eliminate the politics out of staff management. Commissioner Mason Blake stated that he had recently spent two days in a seminar presented by the League of Municipalities and the NC School of Government and he had learned that NC leads the nation in municipalities adopting the Manager/Council form of Government. Commissioner Blake share that a lot of the larger towns had adopted this form of government because of its efficiency. Commissioner Kitty Fouche agreed with previous comments and felt that it would be in the best interest of the Town. Brad Hestir of 192 Mississippi Road questioned how much of the Montreat community knows about this significant change in the form of government. Mayor Helms advised that this discussion and Public Hearing came up last month and in February as well. It had been communicated in the Montreat Minute, on the Town Website, posted in the Post Office and included in the official minutes of the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Blackburn advised that no action on this matter can be taken until next month’s regular meeting. Commissioner Jane Alexander moved to close the Public Hearing. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

B. Consideration of French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization LAPP Grant Application Local Government Commitment to 20% Matching Funds: Interim Town Administrator Ben Blackburn briefly reviewed the specifics of the FBRMPO LAPP Grant for the Commission. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer moved to approve the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization LAPP Grant Application and 20% matching funds. Commissioner Kitty Fouche seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

C. Consideration of Establishing a Committee and Setting a Special Meeting regarding Hunting Dogs within the Town Limits: Commissioner Mason Blake discussed his intent behind a Special Meeting regarding Hunting Dogs within the Town Limits. Commissioner Blake would like to include three representatives from the Public, one representative from Mountain Retreat Association, one representative from the local bear hunting club and one representative from the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer’s only objection was the term “committee”. Commissioner Kent Otto expressed his hesitation in including the word “committee” as well. Commissioner Mason Blake moved to set a special meeting to discuss how to manage the issue of hunting dogs in Montreat during bear hunting season. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

D. Consideration of Bid Proposal regarding Texas Road Pedestrian Bridge Project : Public Works Director Barry Creasman reported that on May 1st Town Staff put out bids for Phase 1 of the Texas Road Pedestrian Bridge Project. Over 400 vendors and contractors received the bid and Mr. Creasman met with seven contractors on-site. Mr. Creasman stated that the Town had received only one bid for $317,000 for Phase 1 portion of the project. Commissioner Kent Otto moved to deny a bid from Cekra, Inc. in the amount of $317,000 for Phase 1 repair of the Texas Road Bridge. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

E. Consideration of Adopting Arbor Day Proclamation: Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to adopt the Arbor Day Proclamation as presented. Commissioner Jane Alexander seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

F. Consideration of Surplus Property Resolution**:** Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer moved to approve the Surplus Property Resolution. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

G. Consideration of 2022-2023 Health Insurance Renewal**:** Commissioner Kent Otto moved to approve the 2022-2023 health insurance renewal. Commissioner Mason Blake seconded and the motion carried 5/0. Mr. Blackburn advised that basic medical increased by 4% and dental decreased by 5%.

H. Budget Amendment #6: Finance Officer Darlene Carrasquillo advised that after a complete analysis of the special revenue project for the Greybeard Wall that $4,400 needed to be moved from the streets department to this project to bring it in line. Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to approve Budget Amendment #6. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

I. Budget Amendment #7: Ms. Carrasquillo advised that she needed to move money from police to sanitation to cover additional costs for gasoline and dumpster charges. This money would also go for salaries and fica taxes for a sanitation employee who had passed his one year probationary period. Commissioner Kent Otto moved to approve Budget Amendment #7. Commissioner Jane Alexander seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

J. Budget Amendment #8: Ms. Carrasquillo stated that additional funding was needed out of the streets department and into the sanitation department for auto supplies, gasoline and dumpster services. Mayor Pro Tem Tow Widmer moved to approve Budget Amendment #8. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

K. Budget Amendment #9: Ms. Carrasquillo advised that our professional services/legal fees had increased substantially. Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to approve Budget Amendment #9. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

L. Budget Amendment #10: Ms. Carrasquillo advised that only 26 payrolls were budgeted in FY 22 but there were actually 27 payrolls and additional monies were needed. Commissioner Jane Alexander moved to approve Budget Amendment #10. Commissioner Mason Blake seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

M. Budget Amendment #11: Ms. Carrasquillo advised that another $26,000 bill for legal fees had been received earlier in the day. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer moved to approve Budget Amendment #11. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Public Comment**

There were no further Public Comments.

**Commissioner Communications**

Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer thanked Barry Creasman, Daniel Wiggs, Drew Brown and Jarod McIntosh for Town Hall mulching. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer stated that Montreat Resident John Casper’s new book “The Sky Above” was released today and could be found at all major book avenues. Mayor Pro Tem Widmer also advised that the Montreat Adult Summer Club will host Mr. Casper with a book signing sometime in July.

Commissioner Kent Otto thanked Town Staff for their hard work in serving the community.

Mayor Tim Helms recognized Grace Nichols for her work on Landcare, Brad Hestir for his work with Tree Board, Mark Spence for his work with Board of Adjustment and Wade Burns for his work with Planning & Zoning.

**Dates to Remember**

* Town Offices Closed, Friday, April 15th in observance of Good Friday Holiday
* Montreat Bridge Committee, Tuesday April 19th at 2:00 p.m. in Town Hall and by Zoom Software
* Native Plant Sale, Saturday April 23rd from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Moore Center Field
* Tree Board, Tuesday April 26th at 9:30 a.m. in Town Hall and by Zoom Software
* Board of Adjustment, Thursday April 28th at 5:00 p.m. in Town Hall and by Zoom Software
* Landcare, Wednesday May 4th at 9:00 a.m. in Town Hall and by Zoom Software
* Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting, Thursday May 12th at 10:30 a.m. in Town Hall and by Zoom Software
* May Town Council Meeting, Thursday May 12th at 7:00 p.m. in Town Hall and by Zoom Software. Public Forum begins at 6:30 p.m.
* Town Offices Closed, Monday May 30th in observance of Memorial Day Holiday

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jane Alexander seconded and the motion carried 5/0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

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Tim Helms , Mayor Angie Murphy, Town Clerk