Committee members present: Mayor Tim Helms (Chair)

Maggie Elliott

Daniel Hewitt

Mari Gramling

Dr. Paul Maurer

Richard DuBose

Committee members present via

Zoom: John Casper

Bill Seaman

Committee members absent: None

Town staff present: Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

Scott Adams, Zoning Administrator

Town staff present via Zoom: None

Approximately five members of the public were present at Town Hall and several more were watching via Zoom. The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., and led the group in a moment of silence.

**Agenda Approval**

Chairman Helms asked for items C and D to be switched on the agenda. Dr. Paul Maurer moved to adopt the agenda as amended. Mari Gramling seconded and the motion carried 7/0.

**New Business**

A. Oath of Office for Members: Town Clerk Angie Murphy administered the Oath of Office for each member of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Commission.

B. Election of Vice-Chair and Secretary: Mari Gramling was nominated unanimously to serve as Vice-Chair while Maggie Elliott will serve as Secretary when Town Clerk Angie Murphy is absent.

C. Introduction of MS Consultants: Drew Draper, Project Manager, with MS Consultants Inc introduced himself and stated that MS Consultants Inc is a full service A & E Firm headquartered out of Raleigh, NC. Shannon Fergus, Director of Urban Planning at MS Consultants Inc, expressed her excitement at being in Montreat today. Katie Sieb, a Planner with MS Consultants, was also in attendance. Shannon Fergus was excited that there were members of the public in attendance because Community Engagement will be a huge part of the planning process. Other aspects of the planning process include technical analysis and expert review. The planning process is a 5 step process including: preparation, strategic analysis, public engagement, idea generation and finalization. The planners discussed 3 different branding concepts based on researching our website and the 2008 Town of Montreat Comprehensive Plan. The Steering Committee chose the first branding image “Montreat Tomorrow”. The planners also reviewed a draft schedule of 4 phases. It is their hope to do the Community Engagement phase during the summer months. Zoning Administrator Scott Adams stated that the current deadline to have a reasonably updated Comprehensive Plan in place is July 1, 2022. Mr. Adams will check in with the School of Government to verify the timeline. It was decided that the next meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will be on March 21st at 10:00 a.m.

The planners asked the Committee what their favorite thing about living in Montreat would be and what a key challenge would be with this process? Dr. Paul Maurer loves the natural beauty and feels that a key challenge would be having a progressive view on growth. Maggie Elliott feels that traffic and maintaining natural beauty are key challenges. Mari Gramling adores the peace and serenity and feels that a challenge is maintaining history. Ms. Gramling also stated that while she doesn’t want to change the branding image that was chosen she would have liked to have seen something that embraced the past, present and future of Montreat instead. Bill Seaman likes the serenity and beauty of Montreat and feels that communication continues to be an issue. Daniel Hewitt stated that his favorite things are recreation and renewal and also agrees that community awareness might be an issue. Mr. Hewitt and Mr. Seaman both stated that they used to know everyone they say at the post office but now they don’t recognize a lot of people. Mayor Helms likes the beauty and serenity of Montreat and the challenge is producing a revenue enough to keep the Town going. Richard DuBose agreed with the others about the beauty and serenity and his key challenge was similar to Mayor Helms in that as people enter Montreat it’s important to remember that the institutions are dependent on the support of the homeowners. Mr. DuBose also foresees the June 30th timeline as being a problem. John Casper loves the natural beauty and serenity and the people! Mr. Casper feels that the sense of community and increasing it is a challenge.

Katie Sieb asked for reactions the 2008 Comprehensive Plan List of Accomplishments that was emailed out by Town Clerk Angie Murphy prior to today’s meeting. Mayor Helms said that in most cases this was the first time the group had seen the accomplishments and the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and so not much time had been spent delving into the subject. Mayor Helms stated the 2008 Comprehensive Plan was very well done and had a lot of community participation. Mayor Helms apologized that during the past two years not a lot of activity revolved around the Plan due to COVID-19 and other restrictions. Mayor Helms hopes to use the 2008 Comprehensive Plan as a springboard for the 2022 Comprehensive Plan and where Montreat is going into the future. Mayor Helms urged everyone to read and review the 2008 Plan. Bill Seaman requested a brief review of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan by staff at the next meeting in March. John Casper asked for a little more information about the revenue issues within the Town. Mayor Helms briefly reviewed the issues with regards to COVID, sales tax, and recent storms that have affected the Town. Drew Draper of MS Consultants answered a question from Richard DuBose with the answer that this will be a re-vamping of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. The 2022 Comprehensive Plan will be a new document with new visions and goals for the next 10-15 years.

**Public Comment**

Dr. Mary Standaert of 118 Shenandoah Terrace thanked everyone for being here today. Dr. Standaert feels that “who we are as a community” needs to be considered. Dr. Standaert feels that the first scheduled Community Engagement Workshop in June will be too late and she would like to see one in March. Dr. Standaert also appreciated that Mayor Helms mentioned the fiscal issues that affect the Town of Montreat.

Liz Johnson of 164 Virginia Road advised that she was excited to be a new member of the Planning & Zoning Commission but she wanted to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee for their service. Mrs. Johnson thanked the members for giving the Town of Montreat a voice.

Julie Schell of 161 Virginia Road started as a visitor to Montreat and since then she and her husband have bought a home here and will eventually retire in Montreat. Mrs. Schell is interested in Community Engagement and making sure all voices are heard. Mrs. Schell echoed Mrs. Johnson’s thanks to the members for their service.

Priscilla Hayner of 319 Assembly Drive shared her interest in Community Engagement.

**Adjournment**

Daniel Hewitt moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Paul Maurer seconded and the motion carried 7/0. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

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Tim Helms, Chair Angie Murphy, Town Clerk