

**Town of Montreat
Board of Commissioners
Public Forum Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2023 – 6:30 p.m.
Town Hall**

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

Board members absent: Commissioner Jane Alexander
Commissioner Tom Widmer

Town staff present: Ben Blackburn, Interim Town Manager
Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

A few members of the public were present. Mayor Tim Helms called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., and led the group in a moment of silence. Mayor Helms took a moment to remember Shannon Ingersoll who passed away last week after a long illness. Mrs. Ingersoll was a long time member of the Montreat Board of Adjustment and most recently the Bridge Aesthetics Committee.

Agenda Approval

Mayor Pro Tem Mason Blake moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 3/0.

Public Forum

Martha Campbell of 149 Maryland Place read from a list of prepared questions about the Town of Montreat attorney fees in the ongoing litigation regarding the Montreat Lodge project. Total Town Expenses for this matter through 12/31/22 equal \$87,138.63 for attorney fees and \$14,792 for staff time and fees for a total of \$101,930.63. At this stage in the process the average current monthly expenses are less than \$500 a month. Mrs. Campbell asked where in the current budget does the extra money for this and other litigations derive from. Mayor Helms advised that there is a line item in the Town's annual operating budget for Professional Services which includes attorney fees. Mayor Helms also advised that Staff and Town Council adopted a budget based on prior attorney fees and estimated future attorney costs. Mrs. Campbell asked how financial updates related to this and other litigations be shared with residents of the Town of Montreat now and in the future. Mayor Helms advised that most, if not all documents, contained at the Town Hall are considered Public Record and are available for public review by request. There are some statutes that regulate the release of attorney-client communications.

Tom Frist of 98 Frist Road reflected on a recent email sent by Town resident Don Reid regarding the proposal of renting out Town Hall as Event Space. Mr. Frist asked if the results of a recent survey about this matter were available for review.

Dr. Mary Standaert 118 Shenandoah Terrace suggested that Town Staff reach out to Town Attorney Susan Taylor Rash about the specifics of renting Town Hall.

Arrington Cox of 203 Virginia Road questioned the liability issues regarding the rental of Town Hall.

Bill McCaskill of 114 John Knox Road expressed his concerns about safety in blind curves in Montreat. Mr. McCaskill suggested painting yellow lines in the tight curves.

Mike Collie of 344 Oklahoma Road thought yellow striping would be a great idea as well as trimming the foliage back in or around rights-of-way.

Adjournment

Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 3/0. The meeting was adjourned prior to 6:47 p.m.

Tim Helms, Mayor

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk