Board members present: Mayor Tim Helms

Mayor Pro Tem Mason Blake

Commissioner Jane Alexander

Commissioner Kitty Fouche

Commissioner Kent Otto

Commissioner Tom Widmer

Board members absent: None

Town staff present: Ben Blackburn, Interim Town Manager

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

David Arrant, Chief of Police

Barry Creasman, Public Works Director

Rachel Eddings, Finance Officer

Seven 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 Tom Widmer seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Mayor’s Communications**

Mayor Tim Helms took a moment to thank the Montreat Police Department for their diligence on patrolling and assisting with the parking issues near the Montreat College Campus. Mayor Helms also expressed his gratitude to Streets Department Staff Member Mike Harrison for all his work in keeping the streets of Montreat looking good and clean all year long.

**Meeting Minutes Adoption**

* February 9th Town Council Public Forum Meeting Minutes
* February 9th Town Council Meeting Minutes

**Interim Town Manager’s Communications**

Interim Town Manager Ben Blackburn advised Council that he had passed out a proposal from Mattern & Craig which outlined four scenarios regarding alternatives for the Texas Road Pedestrian Bridge Project. Mr. Blackburn asked Council to review the options in the preliminary engineering request and report back to him at their earliest convenience of which option they preferred.

Mr. Blackburn announced to Council that he had received word this week from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks that Town Clerk Angie Murphy had received the designation of becoming a Master Municipal Clerk. Mr. Blackburn advised that this was a high honor that Miss Murphy completed on her own time away from work. Mr. Blackburn advised that Miss Murphy was dedicated to her job and her love of Montreat and was thankful for the privilege of working with her the past year. Those in attendance stood and expressed their appreciation with a round of applause.

**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.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment at this time.

**Old Business**

There was no Old Business to discuss.

**New Business**

Closed Session

Commissioner Jane Alexander moved to enter into Closed Session in accordance with NCGS 143-318.11(6) for discussion of a personnel matter. Commissioner Kitty Fouche seconded and the motion carried 5/0. The Council removed themselves from the Community Room.

Upon returning to the Community Room, Commissioner Tom Widmer moved to reconvene in Open Session. Mayor Pro Tem Mason Blake seconded and the motion carried 5/0. Commissioner Jane Alexander moved to offer Mr. Jason Burrell the job as Town Manager for a salary of $90,000 a year. The remaining Commissioners seconded in unison and the motion carried 5/0. Mayor Helms introduced Jason Burrell who will start his new position on March 27th. Mr. Burrell took a few moments to thank Council for this opportunity.

1. Consideration of Appointing Ed Kramer to Tree Board: Commissioner Tom Widmer moved to appoint Ed Kramer to Tree Board to fill an unexpired term that will expire on January 31, 2025. Commissioner Kitty Fouche seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

B. Consideration of Appointing Kathy Putnam to Montreat Landcare: Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to appoint Kathy Putnam to Montreat Landcare to fill a term which will expire on June 30, 2025. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

C. Consideration of Appointing Jean Norris to Montreat Landcare: Mayor Pro Tem Mason Blake moved to appoint Jean Norris to Montreat Landcare to fill a term which will expire on June 30, 2025. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

D. Consideration of Reappointing Danny Sharpe to Board of Adjustment: Commissioner Jane Alexander moved to reappoint Danny Sharpe to Board of Adjustment to fill a term of three years which will expire on June 30, 2026. Commissioner Tom Widmer seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

E. Consideration of Reappointing Philip Arnold to Audit Committee: Mayor Pro Tem Mason Blake moved to reappoint Philip Arnold to Audit Committee to fill a term of two years which will expire on June 30, 2025. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

F. Consideration of Reappointing William “Bill” Scheu to Open Space Conservation Committee: Commissioner Kitty Fouche moved to reappoint William “Bill” Scheu to Open Space Conservation Committee to fill a term which will expire on June 20, 2025. Commissioner Tom Widmer seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

G. Consideration of Approving Proposal Number 58136 with Liquid Engineering Corporation: Public Works Director Barry Creasman advised that every five years the Water Department has to have both water tanks cleaned and inspected. Mr. Creasman advised that this contract will cover the cleaning and inspection of both tanks as well as some needed repairs to the float for approximately $3,000. The amount of the contract, less the rider, is $5,770 which is considerably less than what was budgeted. Commissioner Kent Otto moved to approve Proposal Number 58136 in the amount of $5,770 plus a rider of approximately $3,000 for water tank inspections and cleaning. Mayor Pro Tem Mason Blake seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

H. Consideration of Paving Projects: Mr. Barry Creasman identified five roads in various parts of Town that were in need of paving. Mr. Creasman submitted for bids and received only two bids from Harrison Paving and C & T Paving. C & T Paving came in substantially less than Harrison Paving. Mr. Creasman asked Town Council to discuss and choose their paving projects for the year. Commissioner Kent Otto advised that Mr. Creasman had invited all the Council Members to get out and walk the roads of Montreat with him to like at the trouble spots and identify high traffic areas. Commissioner Otto said that while Lower Oklahoma Road was not the most travelled road it was a current paved road that was seeing some alligatoring and disrepair. Commissioner Otto then suggested paving the dirt portion of Upper Oklahoma Road. Commissioner Tom Widmer suggested the addition of Overbrook Road which would still bring the total in under the amount of total Powell Bill Funds. Commissioner Widmer also stated that he felt Virginia Road was in dire need of paving as well. Mr. Creasman explained that there was some water line work that he would like to do on Virginia which would necessitate paving after the water repairs. Commissioner Otto suggested leaving some monies in the Powell Bill Fund to put towards additional paving projects next year. Commissioner Kitty Fouche asked if it was possible to get a cut in the costs since the paving would be centered around one part of Town. Mr. Creasman said he would definitely approach the owner of C & T Paving about that question. Mr. Creasman hopes to begin the paving process in May/June before the summer crowds arrive into Town. Commissioner Kent Otto moved to instruct Staff to resurface Lower Oklahoma Road and pave the dirt surface on Upper Oklahoma Road during this fiscal year while awarding the bid to C & T Paving. Commissioner Kitty Fouche seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

I. Consideration of Ordinance Revisions for Qualifications as a Bearwise Community (2nd Reading): Mayor Pro Tem Mason Blake stated that this revision passed unanimously at the February 9th Town Council Meeting but there were only three member of Council present and voting. Mayor Pro Tem Blake advised that State Law requires 2/3 of the membership to vote in order for the Ordinance to pass. Mayor Pro Tem Blake briefly reviewed the revisions and qualifications and advised that no changes had occurred since the last reading. Mayor Pro Tem Mason Blake moved to approve the Ordinance Revisions for Qualifications as a BearWise Community. Commissioner Jane Alexander seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Tom Frist of 98 Frist Road took a moment to thank Interim Town Manager Ben Blackburn for all his work during his time in Montreat.

**Commissioner Communications**

* Commissioner Kitty Fouche advised that the Presbyterian Heritage Center had been hosting a series of gatherings for people who haven’t ever visited before. The last gathering of this kind will be on Friday, March 10 from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. Refreshments and fellowship will be provided.
* Commissioner Kent Otto thanked Town Staff, Montreat College and MRA for all their work in helping to address the congestion on Lookout Road. Commissioner Otto also stated that multiple neighbors have contacted him to let him know that the bears are back in Montreat! Commissioner Otto saw evidence of twenty or more mutilated trash bags behind Assembly Inn earlier in the day. Commissioner Kent Otto expressed his thanks to Interim Town Manager Ben Blackburn for all his hard work.
* Mayor Tim Helms thanked the Montreat Police Department for their work on patrolling Lookout Road. Mayor Helms also recognized Streets Department employee Michael Harrison for his hard work on keeping the streets of Montreat clean.

**Dates to Remember**

* Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting, Friday March 17th at 2:00 p.m. in Town Hall
* Tree Board, Tuesday March 28th at 9:30 a.m. in Town Hall

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Tom Widmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jane Alexander seconded and the motion carried 3/0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

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Mason Blake, Mayor Pro Tem Angie Murphy, Town Clerk