Committee members present: Mayor Tim Helms – Chair

Dr. Bill Seaman

Maggie Elliott

John Casper

Richard DuBose

Daniel Hewitt

Dr. Paul Maurer

Committee members absent: Mari Gramling

Town staff present: Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

Special Guest:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. welcomed everyone and held a moment of silence. There were six members of the public present with several more watching via Zoom Meeting Software.

**Agenda Approval**

Dr. Bill Seaman moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Richard DuBose seconded and the motion carried 6/0.

**Minute Approval**

Richard DuBose moved to approve the December 1, 2022 minutes as presented. John Casper seconded and the motion carried 6/0.

**New Business**

This meeting, without MS Consultants, was requested by several members of the Committee. Mayor/Chairman Helms asked that items for consideration be submitted prior to the meeting. These items were discussed below under New Business.

A. Airbnb/VRBO – Rental Properties: Maggie Elliott suggested this item as a way of the Town having follow-up with rental properties and neighbors in situations like loud noise, barking dogs, etc. Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that residents are always welcome to call the police and report incidents such as these and using water billing information the owners can be contacted. Dr. Bill Seaman suggested the potential for an occupancy to generate revenue.

B. Personal Safety: Maggie Elliott advised that with the introduction of more Airbnbs/VRBOs to Montreat more and more strangers are also introduced to the Town which leads to a decline in safety. Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that the Town of Montreat is probably one of the safest communities in the nation with an extremely low crime rate. Mrs. Elliott again reiterated that she wanted a method of communication between property owners, renters and the Town.

C. Montreat College Growth and Expansion: Maggie Elliott stated that she included this item because she felt it was appropriate with the College’s imminent growth to include it in the Comprehensive Plan. Dr. Paul Maurer advised that College and University Master Plan’s are often a decades long endeavor. John Casper felt that potential growth and expansion of MRA should also be included.

D. Traffic Concerns: Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that the Town of Montreat Board of Commissioners were very aware of the traffic concerns in Town and lately have been diligently working to alleviate traffic issues.

E. Water Quality (Drinking or Stream): Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that Montreat drinking water is about as pure as it gets with only an addition of chlorine. Mayor/Chairman Helms also advised that at the January Town Council Meeting a member of Town Staff accepted an award on behalf of his work in preparing a Wellhead Protection Plan. Dr. Seaman stated that he was concerned with the influx of conferees, rental houses, college students and residences if the Town of Montreat would have enough water to go around. Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that the current wells in Montreat would supply up to a certain point and then perhaps the Town would have to seek other options such as new wells or tie-ins with Black Mountain Water. Dr. Seaman expressed his hope that the Town of Montreat Water Department is looking into the future with regards of consumption and production. Dr. Seaman stated that when looking at the recent incident in Asheville where 40,000 residents were without water for a week he has to wonder if the Water Department in Montreat has completed projected assessments of the pipes/wells. Mayor/Chairman Helms stated that he feels Town Staff does an excellent job in identifying the needs and capacity of the water lines in Town.

Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that stream health and stormwater issues will both be mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan.

F. Noise: Mayor/Chairman Helms stated that while from time to time there are noise complaints for the most part the noise levels remain low.

G. Montreat 2008 Plan – Guidance for 2023 Plan: Dr. Bill Seaman questioned what lessons have been learned from the 2008 Comprehensive Plan: what was good and what could be deleted? Dr. Seaman called attention to the appendices of the 2008 plan which included a table of sources of revenue for municipalities in NC. Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that most of the items listed there involve grants and one-time gifts not consistent revenue streams. Mayor/Chairman Helms also advised that the Board of Commissioners are currently looking for new revenue streams. The Commissioners have been evaluating current services to see if Montreat fees are in line with other like municipalities. The Commissioners have also actively pursued grants to supplement revenue.

H. Town Council Comprehensive Plan Reception: Dr. Bill Seaman referred to Ordinance #21-10-0001 An Ordinance Establishing an Ad Hoc Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee in which he thought the Comp Plan Steering Committee was reporting to the Montreat Planning & Zoning Commission. Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that the Planning & Zoning Commission appointed members to the Comp Plan Steering Committee and the final report will be given to both the Board of Commissioners and the Planning & Zoning Commission. Dr. Seaman questioned whether the Planning & Zoning Commission should join in and voice their opinions on the 2023 Comprehensive Plan. Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that Planning & Zoning were tasked with updating the ordinances while the Comp Plan Steering Committee is more of a citizens ground level review.

I. Seaman Prospectus: Dr. Bill Seaman reviewed his prospectus that he had drafted and sent out to the Committee. The purpose of the prospectus was to say how the Town commissions, boards and committees will fulfill the goals of the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Dr. Seaman took the liberty of drafting a vision statement which he shared with the Committee. Dr. Seaman expressed his thoughts that the Committee as a whole would like this to be the best Comprehensive Plan for a Town of this smaller size. Dr. Seaman questioned how the items identified in the 2023 Comprehensive Plan would be completed. Mayor/Chairman Helms stated that would be up to the Board of Commissioners to decide which items to address and which items to put on the back burner. Mayor/Chairman Helms also stated that there are a lot things accomplished by the Board of Commissioners that might not be as apparent to the public as others such as researching revenue streams. Mayor/Chairman Helms stated that there will be some items in the Plan that probably won’t get accomplished because times and circumstances change. Mr. Daniel Hewitt stated that at the moment if one of his friends asked what the Committee recommended he is unsure of what to say. Mr. Hewitt would like to see, written on paper, what was recommended by the Committee. Richard DuBose stated that the he wasn’t appointed to this Committee to rewrite a Comprehensive Plan but rather to build on the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. Maggie Elliott stated that the Committee needs to discern what is important and narrow the recommendations down. Richard DuBose stated that maybe some of the survey results that indicate “wants” in certain areas could be better addressed if they were referred to other Boards and Commissions.

Mayor/Chairman Helms stated he would like to have one additional meeting of the Committee members only to take the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and note where it needs to be tweaked and where it needs to be elaborated upon. Mr. DuBose feels that ultimately the Committee needs to draft their own objectives and build from them while using the Consultants recommendations as a starting point.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Adjournment**

Dr. Bill Seaman moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Paul Maurer seconded and the motion carried 6/0. The meeting was adjourned at 11:11 a.m.

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Tim Helms, Chair Angie Murphy, Town Clerk