Committee members present: Mayor Tim Helms – Chair

Maggie Elliott

John Casper

Richard DuBose

Daniel Hewitt

Mari Gramling

Dr. Paul Maurer

Dr. Bill Seaman

Committee members absent: None

Town staff present: Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

Kayla DiCristina, Zoning Administrator

Special Guest:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. There were two members of the public present with several more watching via Zoom Meeting Software.

**Agenda Approval**

Mari Gramling moved to approve the agenda as presented. John Casper seconded and the motion carried 7/0.

**Minute Approval**

Mari Gramling moved to approve the January 25, 2023 minutes as presented. John Casper seconded and the motion carried 7/0.

**Review Outstanding 2008 Plan Recommendations and Strategies**

Ms. DiCristina, at a prior meeting, had gone through the existing recommendations and strategies of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and determined which ones were not carried over and which ones were directly/indirectly carried over into the new objectives.

Environment 1: Update the MZO to require fire safe regulations for any new multi-family residential development or non-residential development. Richard DuBose suggested alternate language as follows: “The Town of Montreat should develop regulations to encourage fire safety. These regulations should be customized to fit the needs of the community, weighing carefully the impact on public safety and natural areas as well as the likely burdens placed on property owners as such regulations as passed.” The Committee decided to move forward with Mr. DuBose’s proposed language.

Environment 2: Work with the US Forestry, UNC, Montreat landowners, and other regional partners to assess Montreat’s forestlands and develop management strategies to improve the forest’s health and resiliency. Richard DuBose suggested alternate language as follows: “Landcare should collaborate with existing stakeholders and their representatives (the conference center wilderness committee, Montreat Cottagers, Appalachian Highlands Conservancy) to identify and recommend to Town Council strategies for protection of our forests and for its health and resiliency, and to propose funding required for such strategies.” It was decided by the Committee to move forward with Mr. DuBose’s proposed language.

Environment 3: Create a local erosion and sediment control ordinance for grading permits and

requirements for projects that currently are not covered by Buncombe County’s Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinances. Ms. DiCristina described the current erosion and sediment control compliance controls. Ms. DiCristina advised that she is in favor of Environment 3 and the way it is currently written. It was decided by the Committee to move forward with this objective.

Environment 4: Explore the adoption of additional stream protection ordinances. Ms. DiCristina described the current regulations and advised that she did not know the legal feasibility of implementing stronger regulations. Ms. DiCristina advises that in her opinion this objective goes hand in hand with Environment 3. It was decided to leave this objective in and do some additional work on Environment 12 which is similar in nature.

Environment 5: Institute periodic review (i.e., every five years) by the Tree Board of the protected and encouraged trees list to ensure riparian species are included. Ms. DiCristina consulted MS Consultants about this objective. They stated the intent was to document and support the work of the Tree Board to memorialize the good practices that the Town is doing. The Committee decided to leave this objective in as is.

Environment 6: This objective was removed at the last meeting.

Environment 7: This objective was discussed at the last meeting and alternative language was explored. The alternative language is as follows: To explore conversation easements as an avenue of land protection. The Committee was in agreement on the new language.

Environment 8: Implement the stormwater management plan as required and approved by Small MS4 NPDES Permits. Ms. DiCristina explained the purpose of the MS4 NPDES Permits and its requirements. Ms. DiCristina spoke with Mary Roderick, from Land-of-Sky Regional Council, who is handing the Town’s stormwater plan and Mrs. Roderick feels that it would be good to keep this objective in the plan. It will be a reminder to the Town that stormwater management plans and regulations need to be implemented. Ms. DiCristina is going to suggest to the Consultants to insert an explanation of what the MS4 Permit entails.

Environment 9: Create a funding mechanism to ensure compliance with Small MS4 NPDES Permit. Mayor/Chairman Helms advised that the most common funding mechanism is a stormwater fee/rain tax. Ms. DiCristina feels that this objective should be relocated to an implementation strategy.

Environment 10: Create a stormwater infrastructure plan to inform long-term capital project development and funding. Ms. DiCristina suggested the following language: Inventory the Town’s current stormwater infrastructure and identify opportunities for system improvements and expansions. The Commission was in agreement with the suggested language.

Environment 11: Work with regional and local partners to hold workshops on streambank management and restoration for private property owners (ex. Live staking and riparian zone mgmt.) and to teach property owners how to install stormwater control measures on their property to reduce runoff. Ms. DiCristina suggested expanding Environment 12 to include the educational portion and taking the rest of the objective and including in implementation.

Environment 12: Create a voluntary stormwater control measure program with established goals (ex. 5 new SCMs per year). Ms. DiCristina suggested removing the example as it might be too ambitious and add in the educational language from Environment 11.

Environment 13: Work with local, regional, and state partners to perform education and outreach efforts for flood risk mitigation (i.e., not storing anything in the floodway which can contribute to debris jams.). Ms. DiCristina suggested incorporating Environment 11, 12 and 13 into one objective. The Committee was in agreement with the suggested language.

Environment 14: Create pre-storm protocols for town staff and outreach efforts for residents. Mr. Richard DuBose recommended striking this objective because Town Staff already has protocols in place for pre-storm events.

Ms. DiCristina reviewed the Montreat Vision Statement with regards to Development.

Development 1: Support private property owners in the creation of conservation easements and/or deed restrictions on land with a high-recreational value to the public, such as Lake Susan. Dr. Paul Maurer suggested not “calling – out” specific lands. Mr. Richard DuBose stated he was in favor of this verbiage because he supports conservation efforts in Montreat. Ms. DiCristina suggested removing the word “high” and “Lake Susan” and then defining “recreational value”. The Committee members agreed on the suggested revised language.

Development 2: Explore the allowance of small-scale, neighborhood-focused businesses in the Town Center. Dr. Paul Maurer suggested changing “Town Center” to Montreat. The Committee members agreed to strike this objective from the list.

Development 3: Amend the MZO to include a maximum lot coverage standard, capping the percentage of a lot that can be developed. Ms. DiCristina advised that there is not a maximum lot coverage standard at this time. Mr. Dubose suggested using a different word than “amend”. Ms. DiCristina suggested the word “investigate”. The Committee agreed to use the word “investigate”.

Development 4: Increase flexibility in the MZO for accessory dwelling units. Ms. DiCristina explained how ADUs are allowed now in Montreat. It was decided to strike this objective.

Development 5: Add educational signage for landmarks and streams. Ms. DiCristina mentioned that there was a 2014 Wayfinding Plan completed but it was never implemented. Ms. DiCristina suggested the following language: “develop and implement a wayfinding plan including educational landmark signage”. Mayor/Chairman Helms suggested adding “working with the Town, Montreat College, MRA and local organizations to develop and implement a wayfinding plan that includes educational signage”.

Development 6: Review the capital improvement plan and budget to identify and fund projects that support the goals of this plan. It was decided that this objective felt more like an implementation strategy so it was stricken.

Community Character 1: Explore the creation of a public art program that encourages public art in public areas and in new non-residential development projects. Ms. DiCristina reviewed the vision statement for these objectives. It was decided by the Committee that this objective needed to be stricken.

Community Character 2: Establish a new committee (or empower the Open Space Conservation Committee or similar group) to work with private property owners in nominating historic structures and/or landmarks to the National Registry of Historic places. It was decided by the Committee to strike this objective.

Community Character 3: Look for opportunities with local, regional, and state partners to educate the public about the value of historic properties and landmarks, including but not limited to creating educational brochures and posters. Ms. DiCristina suggested striking “look for opportunities” and adding “support current and new activities”. The Committee agreed to the suggested language.

Community Character 4: Add community events to the Town website’s calendar to celebrate and showcase the community’s spirit. It was decided this objective is operational in nature and is already being taken care of by Town Staff.

Community Character 5: Conduct an accessibility audit of public facilities and publicly-used facilities in partnership with local and regional partners. Identify options to enhance the accessibility of facilities in an ADA Transition Plan. It was decided by the Committee to strike this objective.

Community Character 6: Work with local and regional partners to improve the bicycle and pedestrian environment by installing bike parking, park benches and other basic amenities throughout the Town and at trailheads. Ms. DiCristina suggested this objective being removed because there is a place for it under transportation.

Community Character 7: Look for private-public partnership opportunities to fund and support trail maintenance. It was decided by the Committee to leave this objective in the plan as “support”.

Transportation 1: Develop a comprehensive wayfinding plan for the Town for consistent directional and educational signs highlighting key destinations. Ms. DiCristina reviewed the vision statement for Transportation. Ms. DiCristina stated this objective had already been placed in another category and suggested removing it from transportation.

Transportation 2: Calm traffic and lower speeds by partnering with regional transportation agencies to conduct a study of feasible options. This plan may include, but is not limited to posting advanced warning signs near the Montreat Gate, seasonal speed tables near the campus, or additional stop signs.It was decided to leave this objective in the plan.

Transportation 3: Conduct a parking circulation and access study to assess need for overflow trail parking. It was of Ms. DiCristina’s view that this needed to be included in the plan. Ms. DiCristina advised that she’s going to work on some language that would allow this objective to be in the plan without the need for an access study.

Transportation 4: Work with local and regional partners to explore the implementation of an on-street parking payment system. The Committee decided to strike this objective.

Transportation 5: Develop a freight plan in partnership with local and regional partners. This plan may include, but is not limited to, designated truck routes, drop/off/delivery zones, and a permit system for overweight vehicles to be charged a fee. This objective was actually in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. The Committee decided to change the verbiage to “investigate developing…..”.

Transportation 6: Expand bike and pedestrian infrastructure in priority areas, according to the Town’s Bike and Pedestrian Plan. Ms. DiCristina advised that the Town of Montreat has a Bicycle Pedestrian and Greenways Master Plan from 2008. Ms. DiCristina advised updating the verbiage to say “Updating and Implementing the Town’s Bicycle Pedestrian and Greenways Master Plan”.

Ms. DiCristina advised that while going through the objectives of the plan she didn’t see anything that covered growth management. She proposed adding the following objective: “Preserve protect and enhance the character of Montreat by evaluating and improving existing allowable uses, density and dimensional regulations in each zoning district.” MS Consultants, when contacted by Ms. DiCristina, were in agreement with adding this objective to the plan. Ms. DiCristina is going to finalize this language and send to the Committee before the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, February 20th from 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Adjournment**

John Casper moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Paul Maurer seconded and the motion carried 7/0. The meeting was adjourned at 2:18 p.m.

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Tim Helms, Chair Angie Murphy, Town Clerk