Committee members present: Mayor Tim Helms – Chair

John Casper

Richard DuBose

Maggie Elliott

Mari Gramling

Daniel Hewitt

Dr. Bill Seaman

Dr. Paul Maurer

Committee members absent: None

Town staff present: Kayla DiCristina, Zoning Administrator

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

Jason Burrell, Town Manager

Special Guest:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There were two members of the public present with several more watching via Zoom Meeting Software.

**Agenda Approval**

Dr. Paul Maurer moved to approve the agenda as presented. Richard DuBose seconded and the motion carried 7/0.

**Minute Approval**

Dr. Paul Maurer moved to approve the March 17, 2023 minutes as presented. Richard DuBose seconded and the motion carried 7/0.

**Review Draft Plan**

Zoning Administrator Kayla DiCristina stated that the Comprehensive Plan needs to adopted by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and then recommended approval by the Planning & Zoning Commission and then up for adoption at the Board of Commissioners meeting. Ms. DiCristina hopes that the Committee today can move to adopt with revisions which will then be passed on to the Consultants.

Dr. Bill Seaman suggested that an “executive summary” should be provided at the very beginning of the document. Dr. Seaman felt this would increase the user-friendliness of the material even for a casual reader. Mr. John Casper suggested that the “executive summary” include key points that the Committee wants the reader to walk away with knowing. Dr. Seaman had prepared a draft “executive summary” for the Committee to review and Mr. Casper had provided an addendum to Dr. Seaman’s summary. Ms. DiCristina advised that she would draft an “executive summary” using both Dr. Seaman’s and Mr. Casper’s examples and then the Committee could come back together and approve or make changes.

Dr. Seaman had expressed concern that it was not clear who was doing the “thank you”. Dr. Seaman also noted that mention of Town Staff was omitted in the acknowledgments paragraph. Dr. Seaman also stated that the use of honorifics were not consistent. Dr. Seaman also stated that nowhere in the document was the process outlined of how steering committee members were selected or appointed. Ms. DiCristina did not feel it was necessary to outline the process of appointment because in all comprehensive plan development members are chosen from a group of representatives in a standard process. It was decided to add Town Staff to the acknowledgments and to remove all honorifics.

Dr. Seaman also suggested to some minor changes to “Contents” such as inserting subheadings from the test under each of the main headings given in the present table of contents. It was agreed to move forward with subheadings.

The first section to be discussed was “Plan Overview”. Richard DuBose suggested adding quotations to “Montreat Tomorrow”. Dr. Seaman suggested that it would be helpful to have a paragraph or two telling how the document was prepared. Mr. Casper suggested some editing to the timeline graphic.

Mr. Richard DuBose pointed out a typographical error in the section entitled “Community Context”. Mr. DuBose also proposed a phrasing to say the following: “..although privately owned, operate more like public spaces..”. There were several other typographical errors corrected.

Dr. Maurer and Mr. DuBose suggested removing “best” and adding “historically” at the top of page seven. Mr. DuBose suggested the following sentence: “The peaceful and restorative quality of the natural beauty has attracted people to the area for thousands of year.” Mayor Helms expressed his thoughts that the College should be included in that first paragraph. Dr. Maurer will draft a few sentences to send to Ms. DiCristina.

Dr. Seaman had some concerns on page eight in figure 2-2 for the term ETJ to be defined. Ms. DiCristina stated that ETJ was defined later in “Land Use & Zoning” and she preferred it staying in that location. Mr. Casper suggested either writing out “Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction” and putting ETJ in parenthesis or adding a glossary at the back of the document. Ms. DiCristina agreed with writing out “Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction” but also suggested adding an asterisk and directing people to page twelve. Ms. DiCristina did not recommend a glossary because that would be extremely time intensive and there would not be money in the budget for this expense. Ms. DiCristina advised the Committee to let her know if there specific items that needed to be clarified.

Dr. Seaman suggested an explicit sentence on page nine giving actual population numbers for full-time permanent residents, seasonal/absentee homeowners and college students. Ms. DiCristina advised that breakdown information of that kind was unavailable. Ms. DiCristina made notes to ask the Consultants to include college student population numbers.

Mr. DuBose suggested a number of minor word changes to the first paragraph on page ten. Mr. DuBose also recommended the following change in paragraph two under tourism: “Anecdotal evidence suggests that parks, sidewalks, bike paths and other public spaces attract residents and visitors from around the region”. There was a conversation about traffic challenges versus traffic problems in Montreat. Ms. DiCristina suggested adding general language, on page nine, about the effects of population growth on the Town and particularly speak to traffic which will be reviewed at the next meeting. Ms. DiCristina also suggested on page ten adding the following: “An increase in visitors to Montreat will likely have an effect on parking at the trailheads and coupled with an increase in population the volume of traffic in the Town.” It was decided to remove the following sentence: “To afford today’s housing costs in Montreat, new homeowners likely have high incomes or retirement savings”. Mr. DuBose made a correction with regards to the number of MRA’s individual rooms and suggested changing the sentence to read “The MRA has 235 rooms across thirteen lodges…” Ms. DiCristina suggested adding the following to the first sentence of the Housing paragraph: “However, median home values have risen at a slower rate in Montreat than in the rest of the State.” Mr. DuBose suggested adding to the Executive Summary the challenges of understanding the revenue picture in Montreat. Dr. Maurer suggested a sentence or two about revenue streams in Montreat as well. Dr. Maurer also mentioned that Figure 2-6 on page ten showed an incorrect graphic for Black Mountain Median Home Values. Mr. Dubose suggested the following sentence to be added to page seven: “Montreat is home to Montreat College….” and then incorporate Dr. Maurer’s language he has provided to Ms. DiCristina.

Mr. DuBose made several punctuation and typographical corrections on pages twelve and thirteen.

Mr. DuBose made the following change on page fourteen: “Although privately owned, this piece of MRA property is managed for public use.” Mr. DuBose also suggested more elaboration on the last sentence in the second column. Ms. DiCristina suggested removing the “Voluntary Conservation Agreement” from the appendix as it is not a Montreat document. Mr. DuBose is going to draft some language about the tax base.

Dr. Seaman corrected the spelling of Little Piney Branch in the map on page eighteen. Mr. DuBose suggested some corrections to Figure 2-12 regarding Town boundaries. Ms. DiCristina proposed removing pages eighteen and nineteen and changing the title of Figure 2-10 to Current Zoning and Land Use.

Mr. DuBose made several punctuation and grammatical changes to page twenty-two. Mr. DuBose suggested the following sentence: “Assuming weather patterns continue to worsen climate changes is a potential threat to the health of the forest.” Ms. DiCristina suggested the following sentences: “Concern about wildfires in North Carolina has increased. The threat of wildfires could continue to increase due to dry conditions. Historic forest management has increased the prevalence of fire-sensitive species in the region”. Mr. DuBose suggested inserting “Historic forest management…” before “The threat of wildfires…” Dr. Seaman suggested “Forest management practices…” instead of “Historic forest management…”

Mr. DuBose made some punctuation corrections on page twenty-three. Mayor Helms suggested adding “stream” before “…water quality and major storms” to differentiate between drinking water.

Mr. DuBose suggested changing “unsuitable” to “difficult” on page twenty-four and notated a spacing error in the second paragraph. Ms. Gramling suggested a different color being used to delineate Slope Movement Lines on page twenty-six and twenty-seven. Mr. DuBose suggested footnoting “GeoDetic Control Points” for further understanding on page twenty-seven. Mr. DuBose suggested labeling Lake Susan in the Legend on Figure 2-18.

Dr. Seaman suggested a description of the design of the survey, advertisement and analysis of responses on page thirty-four. Ms. DiCristina was not in favor of adding a description of the design of the survey but thought including a description of the methods of distribution would be helpful. Ms. DiCristina also agreed that adding a copy of the survey to the appendix would be useful. Mr. DuBose made several grammar and punctuation changes on this page as well.

Dr. Seaman suggested adding a link to the 2020 Town survey to the appendix for interested citizens. Mr. DuBose suggested adding into the Executive Summary a statement suggesting that we believe that the announcing of the Montreat Lodge project in 2021 may have had an impact with the number of survey responses and the character of survey responses. Dr. Seaman suggested deleting Figure 3-3 because it is completely subjective but adding in graphics from the actual survey. Mr. DuBose did not feel that Figure 3-3 should be removed because it communicates a valuable message. It was decided to include Figure 3-3 in the appendix of the document. Dr. Maurer questions the integrity of the survey because of the possibility of unverifiable duplicates. Ms. DiCristina will check with the consultants to make sure there were no duplicates in the 2022 survey. Ms. DiCristina also mentioned that a caveat may be added to say some survey responders may not live in Montreat.

Mr. DuBose made some grammar corrections on page thirty-seven.

Mr. Casper suggested on page thirty-eight to split the top sentence into two separate sentences. Ms. Gramling suggested different colors for Figure 3-6.

Ms. DiCristina stated that Chapter 4 is the objectives section which the Steering Committee spent a lot of time reviewing so she did not feel it needed to be reviewed again.

It was decided that the next meeting for review of the final draft plan would be help on May 30th from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. It was decided that a copy editing work session would be held on Wednesday, April 26th from 1:000 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. for whomever wants to attend.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Gramling moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. John Casper seconded and the motion carried 6/0. The meeting was adjourned at 11:23 p.m.

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Tim Helms, Chair Angie Murphy, Town Clerk