

LANDCARE MINUTES, Wednesday, **September 4, 2024** Montreat Town Hall, 9:00 am

Call to Order 9:00 AM

Moment of Silence

Call for Quorum: A quorum was present.

Entity	Name	Vote	Pres
MLC Chair, NWF Community Wildlife Habitat	Arrington Cox	t	x
Vice Chair. Montreat College	Dottie Shuman	v	x
MLC Secretary-Treasurer & Town Rep.	Jean Norris	v	x
Town Representative	Kathy Putnam	v	x
Town Commissioner	Kitty Fouche	v	x
Cottagers Wilderness & Open Space	<u>Beth Fountain</u>	v	x
Montreat College	Josh Holbrook	v	x
Montreat Conference Center (MCC/MRA)	Tracy Bailey	v	x
Montreat Conference Center (MCC/MRA)	Martha Todd Sloan	v	x
MCC/MRA -Wilderness Committee	Jason Nanz	v	x
PCUSA Earth Ministry Team	<b>Hal Demarest/George Sawyer-alt</b>	v	x
	TOTAL	11	10/11

Others who attend	Role	Present ?	Contact/Notes
Josh Greene	Recording mtg		Room was setup for recording meeting
Brad Hestir, Chair	Tree Board Chair		Invitation to Chestnut events in Asheville
Meredith Greene	Interested citizen		
Jim Williamson	Interested citizen		Artist, created card and print sale items
Grace Nichols	Ex officio		Flat Creek Crossing
Abigail Leahy	HRI Team		Natural Science Lab. Coord., Montreat College
Martha Campbell	Ex Officio		
Savannah Parrish	Town Manager		
Angela Murphy	Town Clerk		
Betty Douglas	Chair MNPS 2024	x	Chair, Native Plant Sale
David Arrant	Chief of Police, Town of Montreat		
Patti Pyle	Interested citizen		Flat Creek Crossing Team leader
Melanie Sovine	Interested citizen		Expecting to become year-round resident soon
Joe Standaert	Interested citizen		
Tanner Pickett	MRA VP		Observing
Ed Kramer	Tree Board member		Report on Treasured Trees in Montreat
George Sawyer	Flat Creek Crossing team/MPC Earthcare		

Adoption of Agenda, as amended to make the first order of business discussion and vote on modifications to Montreat Landcare Committee bylaws: M S Carried

Adoption of May & June Minutes: M S Carried

**Treasurer’s Report**

Montreat Landcare Committee Treasurer’s report September 4, 2024 – Jean Norris, Secretary-Treasurer Including Town of Montreat data from **Landcare Balance and Activity as of July 31, 2024**

At the end of FY 23-24 and continuing, Town of Montreat accounts show 3 balances for Landcare.

Account Number & Label July 2024	Beginning balance	Incoming	Outgoing	Balance
26-80-3340-340 Contributions Landcare	98,289.19	13,265.01 Pigeon River Fund		111,554.20
26-80-6190-330 Departmental supplies	403.44		441.16	-37.72
10-80-6190-340 Remainder of Town Budget Amt	1,530.52	3,500	259.74	5,030.52

About \$6,600 belongs to Montreat Landcare Committee and the remainder was raised for Flat Creek Crossing. Your Treasurer now gets instant email notification of online donations, including information entered by the credit card user of the purpose of the payment. In the May accounting report, we see \$34,065 received for the Pigeon River Fund grant for Flat Creek Crossing. In June we see increased donations to Flat Creek Crossing resulting from a fundraising campaign to raise the required match for a \$272,000 grant request from NC Dept Parks and Recreation (goal \$54,400). The approved Town budget for FY 24-25 includes the requested \$3,500 for Landcare, shown above, which should put us in a good financial position to proceed with montreatlandcare.org website rebuild, when the web designer is ready to proceed. Some pre-approved Landcare expenses are being charged to the Town Managers credit card.

**Flat Creek Crossing** report by Jean Norris

Most of the Flat Creek Crossing Team was either in the Town Hall or listening elsewhere to the to decision meeting in which the NC Parks and Rec Grant Committee voted on awards for various State-funded grant programs, including Accessible Parks Grants. Flat Creek Crossing was included in an overall “yes” vote for all projects seeking funding. The Committee recalculated our budget to disallow two line items, and still awarded us \$255,923, requiring a match of \$51,545. Our fund-raising is on target to have the matching funds in hand as we begin construction. We will be able to continue to complete the full physical project.

We also sought and received Town approval to submit the Phase II application to Buncombe County Tourism Development Fund for enough money to complete the Trail itself, the garden and picnic area, in case we did not receive APG funding or received less than we need, with the intention to let the grants match each other if we did receive APG funding. We have a presentation to the BCTDF committee on September 5, and a site visit on September 19. Both times allow us to modify our grant request in line with the new reality.

-----Public Comments-----None-----

**NEW BUSINESS**

Discussion and vote on revision of Bylaws

July 14, 2024

**Re: Approval of Bylaw Revisions**

Dear Board,

I ask that you consider the following suggestions for revising our current bylaws and be prepared to discuss and vote at our August meeting.

## ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS

Article 4.1 currently reads:

Members of MLC shall be named by the leadership of the following entities in the numbers shown.

**Suggested revision to read:** Members of MLC shall be named by the leadership of the following entities in the numbers shown. **Each member shall be entitled to one vote, with the exception noted in Article 5.2.2. Each entity may appoint an alternate representative to serve as a full member when their representative is not in attendance. Absentee voting is not permitted**

Reason: Clarification. Appropriate inclusion in Article 4.1.

Article 4.3 currently reads:

Appointment of alternate members: Each entity may appoint an alternate member to serve as full member when their representative is not in attendance. Absentee voting is not permitted.

**Suggested revision: Strike Article 4.3**

Reason: More appropriate to include in Article 4.1

## Article V. LEADERSHIP

Article 5.1.1 currently reads:

In January of every other year, beginning in January 2023, MLC shall elect the following officers for two-year terms: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary/Treasurer.

**Suggested revision to read:**

Article 5.1.1 In January of every other year, beginning in January 2023, MLC shall elect the following officers for two -year terms: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, **Secretary, and Treasurer.**

Reason: To conform with revisions to Article 5.2.5

Article 5.2.5 currently reads:

The Secretary/Treasurer shall be responsible for ensuring that the minutes of each meeting are developed, and after approval filed with the Town Clerk. The Secretary/Treasurer will present a brief monthly financial report obtained from the Town Office staff.

**Suggested revision to read:**

Article 5.2.5 **The Secretary** shall be responsible for ensuring that the minutes of each meeting are developed and after approval filed with the Town Clerk.

Add new 5.2.6:

**5.2.6 The Treasurer** will present a brief monthly financial report obtained from the Town office staff. **The Secretary will attach the report to the minutes of the meeting.**

Reasons: Due to the increased bookkeeping required of our treasurer for fundraising efforts for Flat Creek Crossing, the requirements of the dual positions make it prudent to break these two positions apart.

Thank you! Arrington

**Moved** to approve proposed by-laws changes: Beth Fountain. **Second:** Tracy Bailey **Carried**

Discussion points included the intent to create job descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair – adding to those prepared for the Secretary and Treasurer - and to create a “binder” of bylaws, job descriptions, and procedures. Beth Fountain suggested that this material be compiled and distributed electronically, rather than on paper.

**Montreat Landcare Committee Nominating Committee report** by Bill Seaman—The three-person team of Katie Widmer, Grace Nichols, and Bill Seaman (chair) is now formed. Ahead of their organizational meeting, Bill collected worksheets at the Landcare August meeting which Landcare members used to identify possible candidates for officer positions in 2025. Our team has solicited position descriptions from Arrington and Jean, for use in drafting an overall set of guidelines and procedures for future nominating committees.

## ENTITY REPORTS

**Town of Montreat-** Kitty Fouche, **Kathy Putnam**, Jean Norris

**Kathy Putnam:** The Town Council received a report on the status of the Flat Creek Crossing project search for funding. The Council voted to approve submitting the Phase II grant application to Buncombe County Tourism Development Fund (\$135,772) on August 16, one week before decisions will be announced for the NC Parks and Rec Accessible Parks grant application (\$272,000).

**Kitty Fouche:** The Town has received 450 responses to the **Bearwise** Survey, which is unprecedented in Town history. The survey is intended to gather data preliminary to decisions about Town actions. At a Black Mountain Bearwise meeting last week (1 of 4 in Black Mountain), Ashley Hobbs, the state bear biologist, responded to Q & A from 30 people. She said the number of bears in the area is much higher than in the past. The State will extend parts of the bear hunting season, and there are fewer bear hunters than in the past.

**MRA -** Martha Todd Sloan, Tracy Bailey, Jason Nanz

**Jason Nanz:** MRA has a good summer season. The Wilderness Committee is working with Equinox on a next-to-last draft of a Trail Management Plan. MRA is seeking volunteers for trail work – an open call, asking for referrals:

- Trimming and pruning to widen Rainbow Road
- Digging stairs, carrying lumber
- Can deliver volunteers in a truck (did not receive grant request for a smaller Utility Terrain Vehicle)

There will be a UNCA class in Montreat doing a creek survey.

There are currently 40 students enrolled in Montreat College Environmental Sciences.

**Martha Todd Sloan:** Permits are done for the Lake Susan dredging project. RFPs for the work will be out October 1.

**Montreat College-** Dottie Shuman, Josh Holbrook

The Chaplain of the college is seeking more service work for students. Dottie can work with Rachel Thune to create a list of students willing to work for hire. Jason Nanz asked whether service work could include trail work.

**Cottagers Wilderness and Open Space** – Beth Fountain.

No formal action taken, no further report.

**Earth Ministry Team, Montreat Presbyterian Church -** George Sawyer/**Hal Demarest.**

Tying into Flat Creek Crossing, Montreat Wednesday programs will include two presentations on accessibility, September 11 and 18. (Note on 9/25/2024: Those were postponed until a later date.). watch for announcements in case presentation dates change.

## TEAM REPORTS

### **Community Wildlife Habitat- Arrington Cox/Bill Seaman**

Wildlife Habitat—Montreat has earned 27 of the required 30 annual points toward recertification as a Wildlife Habitat Community by the National Wildlife Federation. Participation in the September national conference call will earn another five, and put us over the top. Meanwhile, Bill Seaman will step down from being coordinator of this effort, so that Landcare will need to identify a successor before the end of this year. Bill will pull together requirements of the role for his successor.

### **Native Plant Sale and Arbor Day Celebration – Betty Douglas**

1. Even though we were not able to schedule an official meeting of past chairs of the sale, the consensus we have come to as we've talked with people who've had varying amounts of responsibility with it over the years, is that Montreat Land Care may need to revisit and reimagine a spring event.
2. There is plenty of good information which needs to be shared with the Montreat community and a spring event is the perfect time for that so our thought is maybe lean into more of a tea party. With 5-minute presentations to a seated crowd by Committees and organizations {Added later: and possibly sell tickets to that? just for your committee discussions.}
3. Beth Frith has been approached by someone with deep Montreat ties who may have some interest in taking this over. Don't know if that means they will take it over and reimagine it or have someone else come up with a new plan and they take it from there. Her name is Lucy Roxie- I think her maiden name was Donkle. Her email is [ldr1866@gmail.com](mailto:ldr1866@gmail.com) and her cell number is 252-422-5866. Beth and I will continue to try to get with her in the next few weeks if we can. But I think she would need an official contact as well. I will probably just contact her and let her know that she may hear from someone on your committee.
4. One other thought that comes to me is that it may be time that we stop this event and go in another direction altogether. For example, an autumn possibility has been raised before, especially because that is the best time to plant native trees and shrubs.

It's up to Landcare to take the initiative in the planning discussion.

Discussion points included:

- The native plant sale concept meets Landcare goals and mission, but the primary value to the community has been widespread participation in a shared social event. As we think about alternative educational events, we need to evaluate how well they serve the social and participation aspects.
- Continue with a Fair, not a sale, with limited vendors (for example, the strawberries), information such as treatment of hemlocks, right around Earth Day and/or Arbor Day (April 25<sup>th</sup>)
- Might it be possible to combine a Landcare Community event with Made in Montreat?
- If a food-involved event, Betty Douglas and Beth Frith are available to consult and to cook, if they are in Montreat.

**Moved** to table further discussion until the October meeting: Kathy Putnam **Second:** Dotie Shuman **Carried**

**Firewise - Nancy Midgette**, submitted by email 9/20/2024 for the October meeting, but it is timely for these minutes:

People are not reporting hours as they have in the past. I am woefully short this year and need many more hours so that our Firewise status can be renewed in November. There is an announcement in MRA's newsletter every week. I plan to get one to the town for Montreat Minute, as well. For the past two years, the numbers have been in decline. This is true for hours reported and quantity of debris the town reports hauling off.

My sense is that many of the same people are doing the clean-up work they always have, but just aren't reporting it. One way that I improve numbers is noting houses with brown bags out front, counting the bags, and assigning 45 minutes per bag. But that is only going to get us so far!

**Bearwise - Arrington Cox**

A bear broke into a house and stole sweet cereal boxes, while homeowners slept. It came back the next night.

Homeowners are urged to take responsibility:

1. Secure crawl spaces
2. Close window bottoms at night
3. Secure trash bear proof. The main issue is rental houses. The Town is now actively fining people for bear-strewn trash, cumulative fines
4. The Town trash collection Convenience Center is being overused (by non-Montreat people). College and Conference Center dumpsters are also impacted.

**Flat Creek Crossing - Jean Norris**

See added material with Treasurer's Report.

**Hemlock Restoration** – Abby Leahy. Josh Holbrook present, no report.

**Children and Outdoors, Kids in Parks, and Eco-Explore** – Patti Pyle. Not present, no report.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Continuation of discussion and planning for revision of Native Plant Sale to October meeting.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, October 2, 2024

**Adjourned:** 10 AM M S Carried

ZOOM LINK for live meeting is on the town website.

**Montreat Landcare meeting recording LINK:**

<https://www.youtube.com/>

Respectfully submitted: September 25, 2024



Jean C Norris, Secretary-Treasurer  
Montreat Landcare Committee

**ATTACHMENTS (if any, in combined pdf with approved minutes)**