

Freeland Hall 3rd floor- Directions: Follow wheelchair ramp up and go through the door!

Call to Order 9 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	
MLC Secretary-Treasurer & Town Rep.	Jean Norris	v	x
Town Representative	Kathy Putnam	v	x
Town Commissioner	Kitty Fouche	v	
Cottagers Wilderness & Open Space	Beth Fountain	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	George Sawyer	v	x
Quorum: $11/2 + 1 = 6.5 \Rightarrow 7$ voting members	TOTAL	11	9

Others who attend	Role	Present ?	Contact/Notes
Josh Greene	Recording mtg		Room was setup by MRA for recording meeting
Brad Hestir, Chair	Tree Board Chair		Invitation to Chestnut events in Asheville
Jim Williamson	Interested citizen		Artist, created card and print sale items
Abigail Leahy	HRI Team		Natural Science Lab. Coord., Montreat College
Savannah Parrish	Town Manager		
Angela Murphy	Town Clerk		
Betty Douglas	Chair MNPS 2024		Chair, Native Plant Sale
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	x	Observing
Bill Seaman	Chair nominating committee	x	Past Chair, Leading election, and incoming officer orientation session after meeting
Grace Nichols	Ex officio	x	Member Nominating Committee
Katie Widmer	Rain Garden Brochure	x	Member Nominating Committee
Ann Seaman		x	Provided celebration refreshments
Martha Campbell	Ex Officio	x	Orientation of new officers after meeting

Adoption of Agenda as ammended to move new business to the front of the agenda: MSC

Adoption of August and September minutes (sent out before cancelled October meeting date): Moved by Putnam; Seconded by Nanz; 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

No change from September due to lack of information following Hurricane Helene; however, little has changed. There is a \$115,000 balance in the Landcare line; about \$6,600 belongs to Montreat Landcare Committee and the remainder was raised for Flat Creek Crossing. There was one donation that Jean will send a thank you note for and a \$200 expense for the Flat Creek Crossing event. 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 update by Jean Norris

Most of the Flat Creek Crossing Team was either in the Town Hall or listening elsewhere to the 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

Montreat Landcare Committee Nominating Committee report -- Bill Seaman

Bill Seaman: He announced the slate for the officers – George Sawyer, Chair; Bill Neely, Vice Chair; Kathy Putnam, Secretary; Jean Norris, Treasurer. Beth Fountain moved acceptance of the slate. It did not need second as it was from a committee; all approved.

ENTITY REPORTS

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

Kathy Putnam: No town report this month.

MRA - Martha Todd Sloan, Tracy Bailey, Jason Nanz

Jason Nanz: Lake dredging should be complete by year's end. Storm dumped a lot more material to remove but the project is on track. Trails south of Appalachian Way on the east side are open to the public. Volunteers are surveying and working on other trail areas. MRA hopes to open west side trails early next year. Graybeard Trail will take a long time to open. Three bridges have been compromised and there are many fallen trees. They are pretty close to clearing the upper side of east ridge trails, including Rocky Head out of the campground. The Wilderness Maintenance & Operations Donations Fund could really use donations (link is on Montreat.org website) and help looking for grants. Jason reported they could also use administrative help to organize volunteers. (Arrington Cox and Beth Fountain volunteered.) Jason reported that usable dirt from the lake is going to Swannanoa for use as fill in storm-damaged areas.

Montreat College - Dottie Shuman, Josh Holbrook

Josh Holbrook: He's leading a science effort in Montreat and the tri-county area surveying Helene's impact on hellbender salamander, turtle, and insect populations. A student team is going after grant money for post-storm analysis and DNA surveys on hellbenders. Jean Norris asked if bank restoration is needed to restore a narrower, deeper creek from the wide, shallower creek bed left by Helene. Jason said rhododendron will quickly grow and shade the creek as they did after the last bad storm in 2016.

Cottagers Wilderness and Open Space – Beth Fountain

Beth Fountain: No report.

Earth Ministry Team, Montreat Presbyterian Church - George Sawyer

George Sawyer: Programming for the fall was cancelled due to Hurricane Helene.

TEAM REPORTS

Flat Creek Crossing - Jean Norris

Jean Norris: The Flat Creek Crossing site is currently covered a few feet deep with river rock from below and sand and silt from above. The need to remove that debris, and all the other things that need to be done in Montreat, means we anticipate an 8–12-month delay in the project. Savannah Parrish and Jean Norris have been in touch funders, including the Pigeon River Fund (\$34,065 in hand), Accessible Parks Grants (NC Parks & Rec, \$255,000 granted, but not yet contracted with the Town) and Buncombe County Tourism Development Fund (grant decision pending when grant offering was retracted post Helene). BCTDF invited us to reapply in the next cycle.

The wooden footbridge across Flat Creek was washed aside by the flood, and it needs to be replaced. That foot bridge is part of the Flat Creek Crossing dreaming for the future. We have envisioned it might be replaced with an accessible foot bridge, made wider to allow a wheelchair to pull over and enjoy the view and still let others pass. It is, we think, part of the MRA trail system. It is likely that replacement bridges of all kinds will have more permitting and construction requirements than their predecessors.

As we “build back better,” we need to take accessibility into account in our disaster relief funding requests, wherever possible. Increasing accessible features in Montreat can only make Montreat safer,

more welcoming and more attractive to residents and potential visitors. The kind of features to make accessible include: footbridges, hard-surface paths for access to water, picnic tables, and sidewalks.

Several potential locations for access to water have been rendered more accessible by the lost stream bank. Habitat restoration for trout and salamanders and protection of remaining infrastructure may require building back some lost creek banks and replanting native riparian vegetation for shade, as well roots to hold the bank in the future.

The Montreat Stormwater Inventory & Steep Slope Management Concept Plan from Land of Sky (May 13, 2021) looked at the Montreat watershed as a whole, in part, to identify locations where storm water infrastructure could be added. We encourage a similar overview to look for feasible locations for adding accessible features to the altered natural landscape.

Motion by Jean Norris: The Landcare Committee advises and encourages the Town of Montreat, Montreat Conference Center and Montreat College, while seeking disaster relief funding for rebuilding infrastructure and amenities in Montreat, to collaborate on looking for opportunities to create accessibility, wherever possible.

There was no discussion. Carried unanimously.

Community Wildlife Habitat - Arrington Cox, Bill Seaman

Bill Seaman: Bill said his Wilderness Federation term ends 12/31/24. He is looking for someone to pick it up. Bill explained that the community needs to attain 30 points in the year to remain in good standing. The points are gained through attending webinars and getting yards certified as wildlife habitats.

Native Plant Sale and Arbor Day Celebration – Betty Douglas

Group Discussion: Betty Douglas wasn't present, but a discussion ensued regarding the reimagining of the Native Plant Sale. Bill Seaman suggested naming it the Native Plant and Habitat program to embrace more than native plants. He discussed a Flat Creek 2040 group looking at the Flat Creek ecosystem to determine a baseline for the creek then considering building resilience into the creek. Maybe the "plant sale" could somehow coordinate with this to create a "Creek Week" with a series of events focused on the creek, the heart of Montreat. Jason requested that nothing be done this spring given the tasks still underway for Helene recovery. There was a suggestion to potentially hold it in conjunction with Made in Montreat next fall.

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.

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, January 8, 2025

Adjourned: 9:54 AM Nanz moved adjournment; Putnam seconded; Carried

ZOOM LINK for live meeting is on the town website.

Montreat Landcare meeting recording courtesy of Tracy Bailey, MRA:

[!\[\]\(6bb0e4f14c4133b37d2887cb37e67ddd_img.jpg\) Landcare Meeting 12.4.24.mp4](#)

Prepared by Kathy Putnam, incoming Landcare Secretary, and reviewed by Jean Norris, outgoing Landcare Secretary.

Respectfully submitted: January 1, 2025



Jean C Norris, Secretary-Treasurer
Montreat Landcare Committee

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