

LANDCARE MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 5, 2026 9 AM
Montreat Town Hall

Call to Order
Moment of Silence
Call for Quorum

Entity	Name	Vote	Pres
MLC Chair	George Sawyer		X
MLC Vice Chair, NWF Comm. Wildlife	Bill Neely		X
MLC Treasurer, Town Representative	Jean Norris		X
MLC Secretary, Town Representative	Kathy Putnam		X
MLC Town Commissioner	Jane Alexander		X
Cottagers Wilderness & Open Space	Beth Fountain		X
Montreat College	Josh Holbrook		
Montreat Conference Center (MCC/MRA)	Tracy Bailey		
Montreat Conference Center (MCC/MRA)	Martha Todd Sloan		X
MCC/MRA -Wilderness Committee	Jason Nanz		
MPC(USA) Earth Ministry Team	Hal Demerest		
Quorum: $11/2 + 1 = 6.5 = 7$ voting members	TOTAL		7

Adoption of Agenda

Approval of June Minutes

Treasurer's Report: Jean Norris reported that at the end of May we had \$91,311, most of it for Flat Creek Crossing. Since then, we have added \$8,723 in donations. We have incurred \$14,070 in expenses, most for FCC. The Landcare Committee anticipates getting \$3,000 as part of the town budget. We now have \$89,000 available. We're watching the FCC budget closely

-----Public Comments-----

Stone Bridges Advisory Committee Presentation: Beth Casper, Committee Chair, reported that this project resulted from a grassroots effort following Helene's devastation. In seven months, \$115,000 has been raised for the stone bridges project. She explained that while FEMA made the bridges safe post-Helene, they're not attractive. Beth said the committee is designing the bridges to reflect the early 1900s rounded creek stone treatment. Randy Hollifield of Simply Stone has been chosen to do the work. Montreat Public Works Director Barry Creasman will oversee Hollifield's work. Work will begin on Lookout bridge. *(See the attached handout from Beth's presentation.)*

Martha Sloan asked which bridges are being considered for the project. Beth said the committee is anticipating six bridges, but has identified Lookout, Community Center and the one at the Barn to begin. The work will depend on fundraising.

Beth Fountain asked about the goal. Beth answered that the committee thinks each bridge will take approximately \$100,000, meaning at least \$600,000 needs to be raised.

Entity Reports

- Town of Montreat: Jane Alexander said the town now has a budget that will cover needs. FEMA funds are trickling in.
- MRA: Martha Sloan reported the Bryan Trail bridge replacement is underway and should be done by end of August. This bridge is more substantial to allow emergency utility terrain vehicle access. Most of the expense is covered by a grant from WNC Community Foundation. The rest is from Helene donations.
- Montreat College: No report.
- Cottagers Wilderness and Open Space: Beth Fountain said ownership of the Nancy Holt Wilderness Area has been accepted by MRA at the July 18 Cottagers meeting.
- Earth Ministry: No report.

Team Reports

- Flat Creek Crossing: Jean Norris said the FCC team thinks it has enough funds to finish the project's original design. They're not sure if they have enough for a website. They are concerned that they don't have the funding to repair the damage that has been done by Helene. They have applied for grant funding.
- Community Wildlife Habitat: Bill Neely reported that we're in good shape for the number of private properties getting certification this year. He needs to check on how the town stays certified.
- Landcare Festival: No report.
- Firewise: No report.
- Bear Aware: Bill Neely said the link to request a town check of a homeowner's garbage box doesn't work.
- Hemlock Restoration: George Sawyer said there is discussion about planting trees and treating hemlocks this fall.
- Children and Outdoors, Kids in Parks, and Eco-Explore: No report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Next meeting: September 2, 2026

Adjourn

Town of Montreat

Stone Bridges Project

WHAT: Presentation to Landcare Committee on August 5, 2026
by Beth Casper, Chair Stone Bridges Advisory Committee

WHY: History and Purpose

On September 3, 2025, Nancy Thomas Wofford and Mari Gramling presented the Montreat Town Council with a proposal to restore the aesthetics of Montreat's historic stone bridges.

- The bridges were severely damaged when Flat Creek rose 27 feet during Tropical Storm Helene.
- FEMA restored only the basic safety elements of the bridges.
- On September 11, 2025, the Town Council approved forming a committee to begin the work recommended in the proposal.

WHO: The Committee includes Town Manager, Savannah Parrish with the support of Commissioner Mason Blake. Beth Casper was elected as Chair, Mari Gramling – Secretary, and members Ellen Dean, Hugh Alexander, Nancy Thomas Wofford, Margaret Berry, Kathy Putnam, Ken Shortridge, John Casper and Robin Melvin. Eric Nichols represents the public. We have had 7 meetings and raised \$115,000 to date.

WHEN: When will we start the restoration? The MRA and Town asked that we postpone the groundbreaking until the close of the summer conference season which will end with the Women's Conference from August 14-16.

WHERE: The Town has selected local mason Randy Hollifield of Simply Stone whose work will be supervised by Public Works Director Barry Creasman. The first bridge to be addressed will be Lookout Road at Assembly Drive. Our committee continues to provide guidance on the design's style, mortar, scope, height, length, and landscaping.

The committee's current emphasis is on design details as well as raising awareness and funds from the extended Montreat Community.

Beth Casper
bethcasper1@gmail.com or phone 713-494-4624

Montreat Stone Bridges Project
Community support to be guided by Montreat Cottagers, Inc.
Outline

Purpose:

The Montreat community is undertaking the restoration of the historic stone bridges located in the Town of Montreat. These bridges, integral to the town's charm and heritage, will be carefully restored using natural materials sourced from our surrounding area.

Project Goals

- Strengthen structural integrity for long-term durability
- Use locally sourced rocks and stones to maintain authenticity
- Enhance the natural beauty of Montreat's landscape
- Preserve the historic character of Montreat's stone bridges

Restoration Approach

1. Assessment
 - Detailed inspection of each bridge's foundation, stonework, and mortar
 - Identification of areas requiring reinforcement or replacement
2. Material Sourcing
 - Collection of round and oval creek stones, ensuring structural stability
 - Selection of stones based on size, texture and durability
3. Reconstruction and Reinforcement
 - Careful dismantling of unstable sections
 - Rebuilding with creek stones ensuring structural stability
 - Use of traditional masonry techniques to preserve authenticity
4. Finishing and Preservation
 - Application of protective treatments to resist weathering
 - Landscaping around bridges to blend with the natural environment

Community & Environmental Impact

- **Cultural Preservation:** Maintains Montreat's historic identity
- **Sustainability:** Utilizes local natural resources responsibly
- **Tourism and Recreation:** Enhances entrance and exits to all features of Montreat
- **Community Pride:** Strengthens connection to Montreat's heritage

Timeline

- **Phase 1:** Structural assessments and planning
- **Phase 2:** Material collection from old stable/barn area
- **Phase 3:** Restoration and construction of bridges
- **Phase 4:** Final inspections and community unveiling

Conclusion

The restoration of Montreat's stone bridges, with local rocks and stones, will preserve both history and natural beauty. This project ensures that future generations will continue to enjoy the charm and strength of these Montreat landmarks.