

**Town of Montreat  
Board of Commissioners  
Special Meeting Minutes  
September 13, 2010 – 6:00 p.m.  
Walkup Building**

---

Commissioners present: Mayor Pro Tem Eric M. Nichols  
Commissioner Ruth D. Currie  
Commissioner Jack McCaskill  
Commissioner Mary Standaert  
Commissioner O'Neil Tate

Commissioners absent: Mayor Letta Jean Taylor

Town staff present: Ron Nalley, Town Administrator  
Stephen L. Freeman, Public Works Director  
Misty R. Gedlinske, Town Clerk  
William B. McClintock, Chief of Police  
David Currie, Building Inspector/Code Administrator

Other professional or consulting staff present: Rebecca Johnson, PE - McGill Associates  
Dena Chandler, Landscape Architect - Equinox Environmental Group  
Claudia Nix, Owner - Liberty Bicycles

Approximately 50 members of the public were also present. Mayor Pro Tem Nichols called the meeting to order, led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and held a moment of silence.

**Agenda Approval**

Commissioner Standaert moved to adopt the meeting agenda as presented. Commissioner Currie seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Introduction and Meeting Format**

Mayor Pro Tem Nichols explained that after brief introductory remarks by Town staff, there would be an opportunity for Town Hall-style public discussion concerning the proposed Assembly Drive widening and repaving project.

**Staff Reports**

Mr. Nalley gave a brief overview of the development, roadway design and prior discussion of the proposed Assembly Drive widening and repaving project. He then introduced Rebecca Johnson, McGill Associates professional engineer; Claudia Nix, owner of Liberty Bicycles in Asheville, NC; and Dena Chandler, landscape designer with Equinox Environmental Group as professional

resources available to comment on this project and answer questions from the public concerning this matter.

### **Open Discussion Forum**

Claudia Nix of Liberty Bicycles referred to a 2006 study done by the University of Texas at Austin which showed that installation of bicycle lanes on public streets improved safety from both motor vehicles and bicyclists. The study indicated that bicycle lanes prevent motor vehicle drivers from veering into oncoming traffic lanes to pass bicycles, and also reduce the number of accidents involving bicycles. Ms. Nix said that although the study did not specifically address bicycle lanes on only one side of a two-lane road, she did not believe that this design would pose a safety problem.

Erskine Clarke of 558 Providence Terrace felt that the proposed bicycle lane may draw additional bicyclists and pedestrians from outside Montreat. He was concerned that there may be safety issues caused by the additional traffic or by pedestrians or stroller users in the lane. Ms. Nix said that this could be addressed by public education efforts and improvements to the gravel walking path on the western side of Assembly Drive.

Bill Goodwin of 519 Providence Terrace said that local bicycle shops had been asked not to promote Montreat's trail system to mountain bikers as an effort to preserve the community's character as a place of retreat rather than a tourist resort.

Perrin Wright of 399 Appalachian Way suggested that, instead of a dedicated, one-way bicycle lane, the wider pavement could be used as a shared, 4'-wide pathway for both bicycles and pedestrians. This shared-use lane would be open to two-way bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Janie Moore of 100 Frist Road spoke about her experiences walking, jogging and biking along Assembly Drive. She was concerned that allowing pedestrians to walk inside the proposed bicycle lane may create a safety hazard.

Commissioner Standaert suggested that the Mountain Retreat Association could consider installing some additional sidewalks in certain areas between their facilities to increase pedestrian safety.

Fran McCaskill of 123 Kanawha Drive felt that Montreat should collaborate with the Town of Black Mountain on plans for a bicycle lane connecting the two municipalities.

Philip Arnold of 231 Assembly Drive spoke about a near-miss accident he experienced on Assembly Drive as he crossed the double yellow lines to overtake bicycle riders which turned out to be his own cousins. He supported construction of the proposed bicycle lane as a means of preventing these types of accidents in the future, and said the project also had support from the Montreat Landcare Committee.

**Montreat Board of Commissioners  
Special Meeting Minutes  
September 13, 2010**

---

Lila Ray of 436 Kentucky Road asked about the location and impact of a “plunge pool” drainage mechanism proposed as part of the project. Mr. Nalley indicated the plunge pool’s location on the project plan. He explained that this drainage feature would be similar to one already installed on West Virginia Terrace and would serve to divert stormwater away from Elizabeth’s Path. The plunge pool installation would be separate from the proposed widening. Any vegetation removed as part of the installation of the plunge pool will be minimal and is expected to grow back within one to two years.

Rusty Frank of 205 Harmony Lane commented that the many Montreat College students who own bicycles were also part of the community and supported installation of a dedicated bicycle lane for their safety. He also said that bicycles were defined by North Carolina law as legal vehicles with an equal right to use public roadways.

Charlotte Chesnutt of 133 John Knox Road supported the proposed bicycle lane and felt that visitors from outside Montreat should be welcomed into the community.

Jim Field of 121 Assembly Drive commented that, as a thoroughfare, Assembly Drive experienced a greater volume and variety of users than residential streets. He also supported improvements to the gravel walking path on the western side of Assembly Drive as a means of keeping pedestrians and strollers out of the roadway. He did not feel that the trees marked for removal would make a significant impact on the character or appearance of Assembly Drive, as most were already identified as dying, damaged or diseased.

Bill Hollins of 116 Shenandoah Terrace spoke in favor of the proposed bicycle lane, and also advocated additional signage to direct pedestrians to the existing gravel pathway.

Calvin Chesnutt of 365 Oklahoma Road felt that the future population growth and needs of the Town should be considered and provided for, and supported construction of the proposed bicycle lane.

Dr. Dottie Shuman, Outdoor Education professor at Montreat College and Montreat Landcare Committee member, asked whether the proposed grass swale and plunge pool would be needed if Assembly Drive is not widened. Mr. Nalley confirmed that stormwater control measures of some kind would be needed even if the road is only resurfaced to its existing width.

Daniel Hewitt of 525 Suwannee Drive felt that if the Board did not approve construction of the proposed bicycle lane, several existing traffic safety problems would remain unaddressed.

Erskine Clarke said that while some community members believe that additional signage would be enough to prevent pedestrians from using the bicycle lane, others are more skeptical. He also predicted that the collective impervious surface area of the additional pavement needed for the proposed bicycle lane would be approximately 20,000 square feet, or the size of the Anderson Auditorium parking lot. He questioned whether the proposed widening and resurfacing plans included adequate stormwater control measures to accommodate this amount of additional

**Montreat Board of Commissioners**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**September 13, 2010**

---

paving. Commissioner Standaert disagreed with Mr. Clarke's impervious surface calculations, stating that because the width of the additional pavement would vary between one and four feet, the actual additional impervious surface area would be much less.

Rebecca Johnson, PE of McGill Associates stated that the cracking and potholes now present on Assembly Drive were caused by water seeping underneath the paved surface. She stated that road bed repairs would be made to the marked areas of damaged pavement to prevent this, and also explained that the proposed plunge pool would serve as an adequate means of collecting and slowing stormwater runoff from the roadway before it reached Elizabeth's Path and Flat Creek.

Mayor Pro Tem Nichols, Commissioner Currie and Mr. Nalley discussed the trees marked for removal along Assembly Drive. Mr. Nalley again described the efforts to route the design of the proposed pavement widening to minimize the impact on existing trees, and repeated that the trees marked with orange tape were designated as diseased, dead or dying and would need to be removed for safety reasons unrelated to the proposed paving project. Commissioner Currie did not agree that every tree marked for removal must be cut down, and advocated removing only the diseased or damaged sections of certain trees.

Gordon Neville of 226 Alabama Terrace agreed that the trees marked for removal would need to be cut down. He felt that if the Board decided to approve the proposed bicycle lane, it should be limited to one-way traffic and used only by bicyclists.

Dick Ray of 436 Kentucky Road suggested that, as an alternative to the proposed bicycle lane, the Board could consider simply widening the shoulder area of the northbound travel lane of Assembly Drive.

Janie Moore was concerned that a wider travel lane may encourage faster motor vehicle speeds. Dena Chandler of Equinox Environmental Group confirmed that many traffic studies have shown this to be true.

Bill Goodwin thanked the Board for setting this Town Hall-style meeting for additional discussion of the proposed Assembly Drive project, stating it was an opportunity to build consensus among members of the community. He was concerned about how well non-resident property owners had been made aware of this issue and asked that more be done to keep them and other interested parties informed. He criticized those in the public who may have distributed incorrect information or negative correspondence concerning this issue.

Commissioner Standaert said that the majority of correspondence she had received about this project was related to a community "Alert Letter" mailed out late last month by private citizens. She asked whether a copy of this letter was also sent to Montreat College or any of its students. She also commented that she feels her responsibility as a Commissioner is to represent everyone who loves Montreat equally, regardless of their residency status or the monetary value of their homes.

**Montreat Board of Commissioners**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**September 13, 2010**

---

An unidentified speaker asked whether the Montreat Conference Center or College was contacted regarding this issue, and whether any representatives from these entities were present at this meeting.

Josh Manuel, Montreat College student body president, expressed his support of the proposed bicycle lane. He said did not believe any Montreat College students received copies of any of the community correspondence on this issue.

Bob Tuttle, Montreat Conference Center Vice President for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, said the Conference Center did not take a formal position on the proposed bicycle lane at this time. He also stated that while the Conference Center had limited mountain biking to only two of its trails, enforcement had proven challenging in remote areas of the trail system.

Marshall Flowers, Montreat College Provost, said that the College also took no formal position either in support of or opposition to the proposed bicycle lane. He noted that the majority of bicyclists within Montreat were college students, several of whom had stated they were reluctant to travel on Assembly Drive due to vehicular safety concerns.

Erskine Clarke stated that he was one of the signers of the community "Alert Letter" and said that copies were sent to all property owners listed in the Montreat Cottagers directory. He explained that copies were not sent to Montreat College students because they are not taxpaying residents. He also believed that some of the negative comments the Board received concerning this issue were due to the public's perception that their opinions were not adequately heard or represented by the Board. He encouraged the Board to continue their efforts to educate the public and involve them in the Board's decision-making processes.

Commissioner Standaert noted that until recently, few if any members of the public had attended the Agenda or Town Council Meetings and encouraged consistent public attendance and participation.

Commissioner Currie stated that full-time Montreat College students were included in the Town's Census population counts, and were also allowed to register to vote as Montreat residents. She also referred to former Commissioner Woody Quinn, who was a student of Montreat College during his time of service on the Board.

Dr. Dottie Shuman asked the public to also attend Montreat Landcare Committee meetings and become more involved with community Landcare projects.

Perrin Wright commented that the edge of a bicycle lane could come closer to the roots of the trees along Assembly Drive than a wider motor vehicle lane could without causing damage to the trees. He also noted that, unlike a traditional vehicle lane, a bicycle lane would not need to have an additional shoulder area.

**Montreat Board of Commissioners  
Special Meeting Minutes  
September 13, 2010**

---

Some discussion was heard concerning how the project, if approved, would be funded. Staff explained that \$290,000 had been budgeted for repaving, although this figure did not include tree removal, roadway widening or realignment of the Georgia Terrace intersection.

Grace Nichols of 527 Suwannee Drive said she had read some of the correspondence and overheard several emotionally-charged voice mail messages concerning this project. She supported the proposed bicycle lane and said she welcomed all visitors into Montreat. She did not believe the project would have a significant negative impact on the tree canopy over Assembly Drive. She asked whether the bicycle lane must be marked with traditional bicycle and rider icons or if the Town would have some flexibility to choose its own markings. Mr. Nalley said some type of markings would be necessary at least at roadway intersections, but the Town would have some choice as to their location and appearance. Dena Chandler of Equinox Environmental Group recommended that any style of markings chosen should clearly indicate that the lane was intended for bicycle use.

Anna Hunt said that she and many other Montreat College students supported the proposed bicycle lane in the interest of vehicular and pedestrian safety.

Mayor Pro Tem Nichols thanked the public for the attendance and comments, and said that another special meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 21 at 5:00 p.m. in the Walkup Building to review the submitted bids for this project for possible approval.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Tate moved to adjourn the special meeting. Commissioner McCaskill seconded and the motion carried 5/0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

---

Letta Jean Taylor, Mayor

---

Misty R. Gedlinske, Town Clerk