Dear Council Members,

The Black Mountain Beautification Committee (BMBC) would like to present this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town and BMBC to clearly define goals and responsibilities and to help avoid future misunderstandings as staff and volunteers change over time.

The mission of the newly formed Tree Committee is to support the Town's Public Works staff with the planting and care of trees in the downtown business district. We understand the limitations on staff time and budget, and our goal is to assist with the care of downtown trees, which are vital to the beauty and character of our community and relieve some of the burden on town staff.

As part of this effort, the Tree Committee developed a *Downtown Tree Revitalization Plan*, which included a complete survey of all downtown trees. Andrew Wagner of Catawba Tree Experts reviewed our survey, conducted his own on-site inspection, and prepared a comprehensive plan outlining recommended pruning, fertilization, and the planting of new trees, along with estimated costs. A copy of this spreadsheet is attached for your review. Please note that Mr. Wagner is charging only his cost for new trees, with no markup.

We reviewed this plan with Josh Harold and Jamey Matthews and received their approval for Mr. Wagner to perform the recommended work. The work began on January 20 and will be completed shortly.

The Tree Committee will fully fund all work this year.

Public Works staff currently waters the planters and fills the 3 water barrels used by BMBC to water areas where spigots are not available. The only additional request has been the watering of newly planted trees. The Tree Committee has a plan in place to assist Public Works with watering when staff workloads are heavy, continuing the longstanding work of BMBC volunteers. We have met with Jamey Matthews regarding our desire to assist with ongoing tree maintenance, and he has been very receptive and appreciative of our involvement.

Please note that we are not asking the Town to contribute funds toward this year's work. We recognize the budget constraints following Helene. As you know, I shared our Downtown Tree Revitalization Plan with Circle K and requested support; they generously donated $8,000, which should cover most of this year's expenses. BMBC will fund any remaining balance.

However, we respectfully ask the Town to consider including a modest amount in future budgets for ongoing annual tree maintenance. This year's cost is higher than usual due to the need for 14 replacement trees, overdue maintenance that has accumulated over time, and damage from Helene.

Goal: Our long-term goal is for a certified arborist to handle the planting, pruning, and maintenance of downtown trees, thereby relieving Public Works staff of this responsibility. Tree Committee volunteers will continue to assist with watering newly planted trees and will periodically survey the downtown area, notifying Public Works of any issues or needs. We hope these efforts will both enhance the beauty of our downtown and reduce the workload on Town staff.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kathy Phillips
Tree Committee Chair