Town of Montreat
Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z)
Meeting Agenda
April 16, 2026, 10:30 a.m.
Town Hall 1210 Montreat Road, Montreat, NC 28757

I. CALL TO ORDER

• Welcome

• Moment of Silence

II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

• Suggested Motion: To adopt the meeting agenda as presented/amended

• ADOPTION OF JANUARY 15, 2026, MEETING MINUTES

Suggested Motion: To adopt the January 15, 2026, Meeting Minutes as drafted/amended.

III. REVIEW TERM LIMITS FOR ETJ MEMBERS

IV. ORDINANCE UPDATE

1. Sign Ordinance Update:
   SIGN ORDINANCE SUBMISSION TO BOC UPDATE:
   There will be an upcoming workshop with commissioners on May 1, 2026, to review the ordinance revisions from the 3rd of March with the expectation to send the revisions to the Town Council at its May meeting.
2. Zoning Ordinance Update:
3. Hillside Ordinance Update:

V. Barry Creasman

- Will provide feedback regarding lessons learned from Hurricane Helene that might inform potential updates to the hillside and/or zoning ordinances**.**

VI. ZONING ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES & DISCUSSION

- • State legislation affecting planning and zoning update

VII. UPDATE ON WADE & SUSIE BURNS CONDITIONAL ZONING APPLICATION

- • April Town Council Meeting 4/9/26 (continued)

VIII. REVIEW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ASSIGNMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN 2026

IX. REMINDER OF NEXT MEETING DATE and Planning Board Workshop

- July 16
- Oct 15

Workshop - School of Government, April 28, 2026, NC Planning Board Workshop: ***Legislative Zoning Decisions: Asheville***

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting
January 15, 2026, 10:30 a.m.
Meeting Minutes

Commission Members in Attendance:
Julie Schell, Chair
Clay Hamilton, Vice-Chair
Eleanor James
Bill Tucker
Sally Jenkins, Alternate Member
Gayle Sawyer, Alternate Member

Town Staff in Attendance:
Alexis Baker, Interim Zoning Administrator
Brandon Freeman, Town Attorney

Members of the Public in Attendance:
0 people in attendance

Call to Order

Chair Julie Schell called the Planning & Zoning Commission to order on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 10:30 AM, beginning with a moment of silence.

Adoption of Agenda

> Motion by Eleanor James, seconded by Bill Tucker, to adopt the meeting agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of October 23, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Chair Schell proposed several edits to the October 23, 2025, meeting minutes:

- On page 2, changing "the board should evaluate" to "the commission should evaluate" to correctly reference the Planning & Zoning Commission rather than the Board of Adjustment
- On page 3, deleting the phrase "this item was not specifically addressed in the resume session" as its meaning was unclear
- On page 4, removing the word "friendly" from "the town attorney suggested a friendly amendment" as it was considered superfluous

> Motion by Eleanor James, seconded by Gayle Sawyer, to adopt the October 23, 2025, meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Organization of Planning and Zoning Commission

Chair Schell explained that at the first meeting of each calendar year, the Commission must elect officers. The current officers were Julie Schell (Chair), Clay Hamilton (Vice-Chair), and Town Clerk Angie Murphy (Secretary). All current officers expressed willingness to continue in their roles.

> Motion by Gayle Sawyer, seconded by Eleanor James, to reelect the current slate of officers: Julie Schell as Chair, Clay Hamilton as Vice-Chair, and Angie Murphy as Secretary. The motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of 2026 Regular Meeting Schedule

Chair Schell presented the proposed quarterly meeting schedule for 2026, noting that the meeting dates would be the third Thursday of each quarter: April 16th, July 16th, and October 15th. A correction was made to the October date, which should be the 15th (third Thursday) rather than the 16th.

> Motion by Gayle Sawyer, seconded by Bill Tucker, to adopt the 2026 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting schedule as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Consideration of Recommendation to Submit Revised Sign Ordinance to the Board of Commissioners

Gayle Sawyer, as Chair of the Sign Ordinance Sub-Committee, presented the revised sign ordinance. She acknowledged the work of previous committee members (Bill Scheu, Dan Dean, John Hinkle, and Julie Schell) who began the process that was interrupted by Hurricane Helene, as well as the participation of Tanner Pickett (Montreat Retreat Association) and Sara Baughman Smith (Montreat College) who provided valuable input as communication representatives for their respective institutions.

Clay Tucker noted that the revision process had included representatives from key institutions and that the ordinance would undergo further public comment periods at the Board of Commissioners level.

> Motion by Clay Hamilton, seconded by Eleanor James, to open the public hearing on the proposed sign ordinance changes.

Alexis Baker, Interim Zoning Administrator, and Gayle Sawyer then led a comprehensive page-by-page review of the revised ordinance, highlighting key changes:

- Multiple definitions were updated or added for clarity, including those for banners, flags, ground-mounted signs, temporary signs, wall signs, and window signs
- Content-based sign regulations were removed to comply with the Supreme Court decision in Reed vs. Town of Gilbert (2015) requiring content neutrality
- Redundant sections were eliminated if covered elsewhere in town ordinances
- Flag regulations were updated to align with state laws, particularly regarding the American flag
- Temporary sign regulations were revised to focus on quantitative measurements like size and condition rather than content or quantity

Significant discussion occurred regarding temporary signs, particularly around:

- The definition of "temporary" (referring to the physical structure rather than duration)
- Enforcement of the "5 days after conclusion of purpose" removal requirement
- Maintenance requirements for all signs (including temporary)
- How to handle signs that remain in place for extended periods

The Commission also discussed flags versus banners, particularly regarding placement and size restrictions. Banners are permitted only in institutional zones, while flags (not exceeding 24 square feet) are allowed in residential areas.

Brandon Freeman, Town Attorney, provided legal guidance on content neutrality requirements and enforcement approaches, emphasizing the need to be cautious about evaluating signs based on their content.

Alexis Baker noted that the revised ordinance aligns with the Comprehensive Plan, specifically sections about working collaboratively with town institutions and implementing wayfinding plans.

> Motion by Bill Tucker, seconded by Clay Hamilton, to adopt a consistency statement that the proposed text amendments are reasonable, are in the public interest, and are consistent with the Town of Montreat's comprehensive plan, including considerations outlined in the portion of the plan read by the zoning administrator, and comply with the general provisions of the zoning ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.
>
> Motion by Gayle Sawyer, seconded by Eleanor James, to recommend to the Town's Board of Commissioners the proposed text amendments to Article 2, Definitions, and Article 8, Signage, of the Montreat Zoning Ordinance be approved. The motion passed unanimously.
>
> Motion by Eleanor James, seconded by Bill Tucker, to close the public hearing. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Update on Wade & Susie Burns Conditional Zoning Application

Alexis Baker reported that the application was continued to a date certain at the Board of Commissioners meeting for Mr. Burns and Mr. Hamilton to work together toward a solution. Bill Tucker, who observed the meeting remotely, added that both parties were advised to engage environmental engineering expertise to assess whether the existing structures and plans were environmentally sound or required revisions. Brandon Freeman clarified that the matter was continued to a specific date (April 9th meeting) with the public hearing remaining open, avoiding the need to re-advertise.

Discussion to Consider Reinstituting Hillside Ordinance Update

Chair Schell explained that the Hillside Ordinance subcommittee had been in abeyance due to potential state legislation that might limit municipalities' ability to regulate hillside development. The Commission discussed whether there were urgent lessons from Hurricane Helene that might necessitate ordinance updates despite legislative uncertainty.

Bill Tucker suggested that the Commission consult with Public Works Director Barry Creasman to identify any needed improvements to the ordinance based on Helene experiences, while remaining aware of potential state legislative constraints on "down-zoning" or creating more restrictive regulations.

The Commission decided to request that Barry Creasman provide feedback at the April meeting regarding lessons learned from Hurricane Helene that might inform potential updates to the hillside and/or zoning ordinances.

Review Comprehensive Plan Assignments for Consideration in 2026

Chair Schell presented a list of Comprehensive Plan objectives that had been assigned to the Planning & Zoning Commission by the Board of Commissioners. She noted that progress had been interrupted by Hurricane Helene, but that it was important to continue addressing these items to fulfill the Commission's obligations to the community.

Chair Schell and Bill Tucker described their previous experiences researching specific items (view shed and conservation easements, respectively), noting that the process involved collaboration with the Zoning Administrator to research best practices and then present findings to the full Commission.

The Commission discussed how to approach the lengthy list, given constraints on time and capacity. They agreed to:

- Review the list before the April meeting
- Consider which items might no longer apply post-Hurricane Helene
- Identify which items might be beyond the Commission's purview
- Potentially create a Google Doc for commissioners to share feedback and priorities
- Discuss at the April meeting which items to prioritize for 2026

Clay Tucker emphasized the need to establish priorities among the objectives rather than trying to tackle all of them simultaneously.

Interim Zoning Administrator Updates & Discussion

Alexis Baker reported that since October 23, 2025, she had:

- Worked on a stormwater compliance inspection
- Processed 8 zoning compliance approvals
- Had 4 incomplete zoning compliance applications
- Received 2 variance applications scheduled for the next Board of Adjustment meeting (both concerning setbacks)

This led to a discussion about the frequency of setback variance requests, with Eleanor James noting that many properties in Montreat (particularly older ones) don't conform to the standardized setbacks established in 1983. The Commission discussed whether it might be worth examining potential adjustments to setback requirements in the future, balancing consistency with the unique terrain of Montreat.

Reminder of Next Meeting Date

Chair Schell confirmed the next meeting would be held on April 16, 2026.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

> Motion by Eleanor James, seconded by Gayle Sawyer, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:17 PM.

_____ _____

Julie Schell,Chair Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

Strategy	Status	Comments
1. Evaluate establishing local historic district	Not Completed	
2. Educate property owners on value of historic structures	Not Completed	
1. Evaluate zoning map and evaluate protection for this land	Completed	
2. Update zoning map to clearly delineate each district	Completed	
3. Revisit uses in Woodlands and R-3 to adequately manage growth	?	
4. Evaluate new zoning district need for areas beyond town limits	Not Completed	
1. Create architectural design guidelines to preserve character	Not Completed	
2. Create architectural design guidelines for Town Center	Not Completed	
3. Create "Montreat Manual" for land development standards	Not Completed	
4. Modify Zoning Ordinance to ensure new homes conform to setbacks	Completed	Sec. 609; This standard could still be simplified to min. 15' setback.
1. Create an Overlay District that allows for a variety of uses	Not Completed	Overlay District discussed for Assembly Dr.-fronting properties.
2. Set standards for the Overlay District	Not Completed	
1. Modify zoning ordinance to allow a more compact form of development	Not Completed	This has been recommended by current zoning administrator. (2020 -current)
2. Add Conservation Subdivision design and cluttering standards	Completed	Sec. 501 of Subdivision Ord.
1. Establish height limit for non-residential structures	Not Completed	
2. Evaluate maximum disturbance and impervious cover	Completed	See Chapter K - Environment, Article IV: Hillside Development in General Ord.
1. Evaluate more stringent regulations on slopes greater than 25%	Completed	
1. Does not exist	N/A	
1. Does not exist	N/A	
1. Establish guidelines and oversee process of sign design	Not Completed	Evaluated but not funded
2. Identify locations for signs for orientation	Not Completed	Evaluated but not funded
1. Form Subcommittees as Implementation Committees to execute plan	?	
2. Adopt new regulations/improve existing regulations	?	
3. Update Comprehensive Plan every five years	Not Completed	
1. Adopt user fees, special assessments, facility fees, etc.	In Progress	
1. Request ability to levy RE transfer tax	?	
2. Request ability to levy occupancy tax	Not Completed	
1. Does not exist	In Progress	Building Fees were reconsidered; State pre-empted privilege license tax
1. Coordinate with LOS Council to seek help in grant writing	Completed/inprogress	Ongoing
1. Encourage public/private partnerships for student housing, parking, etc.	In Progress	
1. Coordinate with League of Municipalities & collaborate with other similar entities	?	
1. Explore JV opptys for co-development projects like parking and structures	In Progress	Ongoing
2. Encourage public/private partnerships by providing incentives	?	
3. Identify location for new Town Hall in collab. with MRA and MC	Completed	
1. Maintain permitted uses at density for R-1 and R-3	Completed	
2. Consider Zoning Map amendments with reductions of R-1 and R-3 districts	?	
1. Modify zoning & subdivision ordinances allowing conservation subdivisions	Completed	
2. Modify minimum lot size allowing for flexibility in lot dimensions	Not Completed	
1. Provide density bonuses to developers who use conservation subdivision approach	Not Completed	
1. Modify ordinance to allow attached housing as conservation subdivision approach	Not Completed	
2. Modify ordinance to allow townhomes in Town Center 3 for higher density	Not Completed	Comp Plan shows conflicting geographic areas (see Fig. 6 vs. Fig. 7) for TC 3. "Multi-Unit Dwelling" currently only allowed in Institutional/Residential zoning district.
3. Allow for student housing in Town Center 2 area	Not Completed	Comp Plan shows conflicting geographic areas (see Fig. 6 vs. Fig. 7) for TC 3. "Dormitory" currently only allowed in Institutional zoning district.
1. Modify zoning ordinance to allow for service uses in appropriate locations	?	Institutional and Instituional/Residential zoning districts are the only districts that currently allow service/commercial uses.
2. Define a town center district and add to zoning ordinance and map	Completed	Town Center Overlay (TCO) adopted.
1. Continue street maintenance and upgrade programs of existing streets	In Progress	Ongoing
Strategy	**Status**	**Comments**
1. Inventory all platted but non-built streets	Not Completed	
2. Rank order all platted but non-built streets by usage	Not Completed	
1. Conduct geotechnical study to evaluate acceptable weight	Not Completed	
2. Institute permit system for overweight vehicles to be charged a fee	Not Completed	
1. Conduct vehicle count study to assess peak flow during summer and Sundays	?	
2. In collaboration with other entities, create a visitor vehicle fee	Not Completed	
1. Identify key areas as transition points to slow vehicular traffic	?	
1. Establish shuttle services during summer for visitors/residents for less car traffic	Not Completed	
1. Connect key destinations via a network of pedestrian linkages	In progress	
1. Prioritize trails that will need to be constructed for the pedestrian network	Completed	
2. Provide connections to BM Trail along Assembly Drive by widening/improving path	Completed	
3. Seek funding from sources to aid design and construction of pathways/greenways	Completed	
4. Coordinate with NCDOT and BM to explore bike/pedestrian connection	In Progress	
1. Coordinate with Wilderness Committee to provide connections to Wilderness Trails	?	
2. Identify and prioritize connections to Wilderness Trails	?	
1. Improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity along Harmony, Lookout and Assembly	?Completed?	
1. Evaluate feasibility of bike lane on Assembly Drive	Completed	
1. Identify bike rack locations and work with MRA and MC to provide racks	?	
1. Identify pedestrian amenities (benches, signage) to promote better walking	?	
2. Coordinate with Land Of Sky to identify funding sources for pedestrian amenities	?	
3. Continue coordination with various wilderness committees for funding sources	?	
4. Encourage community to take ownership to offset costs of pedestrian amenities	?	
1. Conduct study to evaluate parking areas and redesign to increase capacity	?	
1. Identify projects which could include additional parking to be shared	In Progress	Ongoing
2. Identify means to encourage private entities to build additional parking	?	
1. Does not exist		
1. Coordinate with BM to identify satellite parking locations during peak season	?	
2. Work with MRA and MC to establish shuttle service shared by all 3 entities	?	
1. Require off-street parking based on the number of bed-rooms	Completed	See Sec. 702.1 of zoning ord., parking based on square footage increments.
1. Assign parking permits to residents for a nominal annual fee	Not Completed	
2. Charge parking fees from visitors on a daily/weekly basis	Not Completed	
1. Create pedestrian pathways connecting buildings with parking lots	?	
1. Create signage at key locations identifying key buildings, places and parking	Not Completed	
1. Investigate locations within conservation easement	In Progress	
1. Determine additional peak time capacity to handle future fire emergencies	?	
2. Study "build-out" scenario and limit future building to limit future demand	?	
3. Identify reasonable sources to best serve demand and evaluate each option	?	
1. Collaborate with MRA and MC to study and identify means to offset costs to expand	?Completed?	

Completed
Not Completed
In Progress
Sec. 609, etc. is zoning ord. reference