

Town of Montville

Town Council Special Meeting May 21, 2019 - 7:00 p.m.

Town Council Chambers

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in honor of our military.
3. Roll Call – Present: Councilors Jaskiewicz, Pike, Pollard, Rogers, Rogulski and Chairman McNally. Also present was Mayor McDaniel. Councilor Caron was absent due to vacation.
4. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve:
 - a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of 5/13/19. – this item was removed from the Agenda as the minutes had not yet been received.
5. Executive Session – N/A
6. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit.
 - (i) Karen Duhamill, 1 Fox Hollow Drive – asked the Town Council not to override the Mayor’s Veto. She said by cutting the BOE further that the cut proposed by the Mayor, she felt the Council was letting down the children and parents in Town. She specifically stated that although it was said the Council does not cut the BOE budget, she believed that, metaphorically, it does.
 - (ii) Jackie Mitizer, 52 Pheasant Run – Urged the Council not to override Mayor’s veto; said she has two children in the school system; has been teaching kindergarten for 21 years. #1 question families ask her, as a teacher, is how many children will be in her class. The BOE has indicated it may be that there is 24 or more children to a class if teaching staff is reduced.
 - (ii) Noah Carver, student at MHS; urged the Councilors not to override the Mayor’s veto. He said he believed a further reduction will not only hurt the children but will also hurt the community as a whole. He said with the BOE budget cuts we won’t be able to stay competitive with towns like East Lyme and Stonington. He said last he looked Montville was losing population and he wants to see that change.
 - (iii) Donna Geary, 11 Depot Road – Urged the Council not to override the Mayor’s veto. Said she represents the older community and is reminded of the 90’s when the Montville community had to fight for the children and for education. She is reminded now of what has been lost in Montville since 1992; sports, sciences, arts, etc. She said she saw a list posted online that was quite eye-opening. She believes with the continued cuts to education, pretty soon Montville will no longer be proud of its schools. She doesn’t believe that teachers should have to be fundraisers and that they shouldn’t have to pay out of their own pockets for teaching materials.
 - (iv) Adam Brickey, 61 Noble Hill Rd. – Urged the Council not to override the Mayor’s veto. He said as a sophomore at MHS he had an English teacher (it was her 1st year at MHS), Ms. Berry who made quite an impression on him; she changed his direction and got him to appreciate school. At the end of the year her position was cut. He believes she would have been a great teacher and would have made a difference for other kids.
 - (v) Manny Repucaro, 217 Massapeag Road – Urged the Council not to override the Mayor’s veto. She graduated from MHS two years ago and strongly believes her education in the Montville School system had a lot to do with her being a good college student and overall good human being. She said children are the future and we should not take away the resources they need to be successful.
 - (vi) Kate Sutheard, 89 Wildwood Lane – did not prepare speech. She said “good for you young people for coming out here today; they are out future.” She said if we make cuts, we will begin a downhill slide and we will not recover. She said if 7 teachers are taken away we will not get them back. She went on to discuss her own job in another district’ compared E. Lyme, Stonington, etc. She said we need to keep the budget

money; reinstate programs and we want kids coming back to Montville when they graduate.

(vi) Ron Peterson, 24 Robin Hood Lane – He said he is the grandfather of a special needs child and has seen first-hand what a great job the Montville teachers and staff do. He asked the Council to reconsider the override of the veto and let the good people go back to work.

(vii) Erin Spurges, 22 Massapeag Road – Urged Council not to overrule the Mayor's veto. She said it is true that the Town Council does not tell the BOE what to cut but a $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million dollar reduction is more than devastating. This large a reduction will impact class sizes, resources, services, etc. and it will limit what the children can become.

(viii) Robert Mitchell, 262 Moxley Road – As the BOE Chair, he is passionate about children and his job. He said Montville is a gem and we have a great district; however, he said it is not sustainable if drastic cuts to the BOE continue. He said he is not happy with the Mayor's \$500k cut and I devastated by the additional \$277 the Town Council wants to cut. He asked the Council to reconsider and even asked them to redo it and give the BOE the reasonable budget it asked for.

(ix) James Wood, 43 Leitao Drive – He said he too is a BOE member; last Fall the Superintendent and Department Heads planned for this budget. He also said that the BOE actually added to the budget proposed by the Superintendent. He agreed that the Town Council does not cut BOE items but reminded them that they do cut funding and that they can't have it both ways. He said the BOE is thrilled with the capital improvement funding and stated that last year buses were provided which the BOE is reminded of on a regular basis. He thanked the Town Council for the capital improvement funds this year but reminded them that we are talking about the operating budget.

(x) Diane Latiga, 10 Pleasant Run – she said she's been on the BOE for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ years and doesn't know enough to speak as passionately as others but talked about her son who was in Special Ed and grew out of it with the help of the great teacher and para-professionals in Montville. She said she understand the financial side and works within that field but believed that emotions play a big part when it comes to our children and that we should be adding funds to the BOE budget not taking them away.

(xi) Colleen Rix, 74 Roseland Hill Road – She said every year it is extremely hard during budget season; she talked about how much has already been lost (field trips, nursing program, etc.) She asked "when is it enough?" and wanted to know when Montville will fully fund the things needed to stay competitive with the Stem and Magnet schools.

(xii) Laura Terry, 24 Anderson Lane – She said the Councilors should be thinking about how difficult the next budget will be and the next and the next. With the dwindling of funds, it will get worse and worse. She stated if she could sell her house for what she paid for it she would move out of Montville. She said having a good school system is what makes the town appealing; it boost the economy and brings in more families and therefore more taxes. She said the Councilors should take off their blinders and capitalize on the economic growth in the area – EB – and said it's in the Town Council's hands to change.

(xiii) Jessica Boyer, 23 Pink Row – She said she moved to Montville 14 year ago because of the school system; her daughter struggled but became successful with the help of her teachers. She said with mental health issues and so many single parents the school really steps up for these children. Teacher and volunteers are doing double-duty and the Montville school system has kept her family together. She said we need to do what it takes for our children to be health and successful adults.

(xiv) Fernan Riaz, 56 Glendale Road – She said she is a UCONN student who was able to start school with 17 college credits because of the EC program at Montville. She said she received a laptop through the school and with such a big BOE budget cut there will not be funds to help other kids.

7. Appointments and Resignations

a. Motion made by Councilor Rogulski and seconded by Councilor Rogers to reappoint Paul Chase to the Conservation Commission with a term to expire on 6/10/21. Voice Vote; All in Favor 6-0; Motion carried.

b. Motion made by Councilor Rogers and seconded by Councilor Pollard to reappoint Anthony Siragusa to the Southeastern CT Water Authority (SCWA) with a term to expire on 8/14/21. Voice Vote; All in Favor; 6-0; Motion Carried.

c. Motion made by Councilor Rogers and seconded by Councilor Rogulski to reappoint James Toner to the Economic Development Commission with a term to expire on 6/12/23. Voice Vote; All in Favor; 6-0; Motion Carried.

d. Motion made by Councilor Rogers and seconded by Councilor Rogulski to reappoint Deborah Schober to the Uncas Health District with a term to expire on 7/12/22. Voice Vote; All in Favor; 6-0; Motion Carried.

e. Motion made by Councilor Rogers and seconded by Councilor Rogulski to appoint Zachary T. Sweeney-Lespier as an alternate to the Conservation Commission with a term to expire on 5/21/21. Voice Vote; All in Favor; 6-0; Motion Carried.

f. Motion made by Councilor Rogers (with regret) and seconded by Councilor Jaskiewicz to accept the resignation of Joseph Berardy from the Parks & Recreation Commission, effective immediately.

Discussion: Councilor Rogers noted that Mr. Berardy has been a member of the Commission for over 45 years and that he has been an exceptional member; he wished him well and was sad to see him go.

Voice Vote; All in Favor; 6-0; Motion Carried.

8. New Business: a. The Town of Montville Herby Resolves to overrule the Mayor's Veto on the Board of Education budget (10950-53051) on the reduction in the amount of \$246,771 as passed by the Town Council at its regular meeting held May, 13, 2019.

Discussion: Councilor Jaskiewicz said he voted for the override but with full disclosure and the many people that have contacted him about the issue he listened to that he is now reconsidering and plans to change his vote.

Councilor Pike said he was sorry that this is what it takes to bring people out to meetings. He said he was impressed with the attendance at the BOE meeting as well. He reminded everyone he is the Finance Committee Chairman and that he does not make light of his job. He said he doesn't hear anyone asking the BOE how it spends the money; funding has been in place and, in fact, the BOE budget was very generous from 2004-2008 to the tune of \$6mil. He knows the budget has waned off but wants to know there isn't enough money. He wanted to know how it is that the BOE cannot afford \$36k on sports and \$6k on field trips. He said we should be asking the BOE these questions as there may be a problem with managing funds. He asked about advertising for a \$100k/year maintenance worker; said a Social Worker should have been hired years ago; why is it an Assistant Principal is out of work 6 months with full pay. He stated that he doesn't play with the numbers or people's emotions. He stated that he had two children go through the Montville School system and that is a strong advocate for education. He said the BOE does not have an easy job and he understand that but that the Town Council does not have an easy job either and it is made harder because the State Department of Education refuses to respond to the numerous letters sent to Kathy Dempsey requesting direction on the MBR. The State took \$1mil from Montville last year and we do not know what it's going to do this year. He said the Town Council, as of now, has done the best job it can and reminded everyone he has an open door policy and is always willing to talk and discuss issues. He said that ownership for the BOE budget problems does not lay on the legislative body alone; he knows the BOE is on a tight budget. It is important to everyone that there be a good balance and that this Council has taken great stride to do just that. He talked about the capital improvement funds for fixing the school and reminded everyone that prior to this those fixtures were

being paid out of the BOE operating budget because capital improvement funding had previously been ignored.

Chairman McNally talked about the 8 years he was a member of the BOE and said he knows what it's like to fight for the children and fight for education. However, his role is now changed and now it's his job to fight for the Town as a whole. He said every department in the Town asked for more money (i.e. Fire Department, Police Department, etc.) and with the State cutting funding to the Town and the 80 people on the delinquent tax list, hard decisions had to be made in the best interest of the Town. He said that the schools need many things: a gym floor needs repair, windows that cannot be opened and shut without being broken; roof repairs are needed, etc. He said what the Council is recommending will allow for those repairs to be done so that we still have schools to educate our children in. He also stated that at the BOE Budget Public Hearing two people spoke and both were concerned about taxes being raised.

Councilor Rogers – He said that this has been a very hard decision and that sometimes it's hard to do the right thing and that, in business, we cannot let emotions take over. He said, like everyone else, he is not happy about this decision; he talked about his volunteer work, being a police officer and previous coaching. He touched on a public comment regarding a reduction in population and said that should mean less students and therefore less funding. He said the Council's recommended reduction to the BOE budget is actually 98% of the Mayor's recommended budget and provides 1% capital improvement. He said that the schools have to be fixed or they will become inhabitable. He said with tolls and the 57 new State taxes being proposed, when is it enough? He said life is not always fair and that we do the best we can. It is not always easy to do the right thing and we should not confuse needs with wants.

Councilor Rogulski – He said he has 4 children in the Montville School system and his youngest is one that has never been on a field trip. He agrees with the statement that more money spent on education means less spent on prisons. However, he reminded everyone that the State of CT is the Town's biggest adversary right now. He talked about the MBR and how it could financially hurt us; not only the MBR amount but the fine that would also be imposed. He reminded everyone that our State representative have reached out to the State Department but that we've received no response. There was a time when education did not have to be fully funded with Town taxes but those days gone. He asked why it was that the State would withhold funding from our Town when we have a Blue Ribbon School System.

Councilor Pollard – She said she's been on Town Council for 8 years; she grew up watching her mom raise through the ranks in politics. She ran with the gentlemen on this Town Council because she believes they care about what is best for Montville. She told everyone this is a Town Council you can trust.

Roll Call Vote; Favor – Councilors Pike, Pollard, Rogers, Rogulski and McNally; Opposed– Councilor Jaskiewicz; 5-1; Motion Carried.

9. Remarks from the Public with a three-minute limit.

(i) Kate Sutheard, 89 Wildwood Lane – She spoke again about cutting budgets and said she understands that cutting the budget is difficult but that it should not be assumed that the public does not ask questions of the BOE. She spoke specifically about paying for an Assistant Principal who is not at school.

(ii) _____ 18 Pheasant Run – It's not the economy that brings people here; it's the schools. He and wife moved to this Town because of the school system. It's the great teachers that we have that make us a Blue Ribbon school. Tax money comes through the people in town; there are not a lot of businesses flocking to Montville. He said he probably would not have moved to Montville if he didn't know it had a good school system. If we don't maintain our Blue Ribbon status, less people will move here.

(iii) Adam Brickley, 61 Noble Hill – question to Mr. Pike; he referred to the comment about not asking the BOE how money is spent; he stated: "isn't the reason you were put in the position is to ask the questions; to get to the people we can't."

Chairman McNally stated that the Council does not answer questions.

Councilor Rogulski reminded Adam that he is welcome to call Councilor Pike to discuss the issue.

(iv) Zachary T. Sweeney-Lespier, 62 Glendale Road – He thanked the Council for appointing him to the Conservation Commission. He spoke about how the education system was so good for him in Montville. He said he is concerned about the budget funding being cut affecting education. He went on to say that he thought the Town should focus on finding ways to get us to the point where the schools generate money independently based on the programs offered (i.e., auto body shop).

(v) Donna Geary – She said she too thought each Councilor was responsible for investigating and asking questions and getting information from the individual commissions. She said, “it sickens me to see this political atrocity you just put us through.”

(vi) Jackie Mitizer, 52 Pheasant Run leared up that when she speaks at meetings, she is asking questions. She said she wants to come to a meeting where she hears that the BOE is being fully funded. She talked about programs that have been cut due to not fully funding the BOE. She talked about how her son cannot get Oceanology and her daughter does not get after school sports. She commented on how it’s a matter of knowledge that custodians and maintenance workers make more than 1st year teachers. She read the BOE meeting minutes and she knows exactly where the money is going. She said she is a kindergarten teacher and knows how it works. She said she came to Montville for the class sizes, programs, and wants them to stay.

10. Remarks from the Councilors and the Mayor.

(i) The Mayor said to say he is disappointed is an understatement. He said the MBR is a this-year problem which will become a bigger problem next year. He said that was part of the reason he didn’t want to cut the BOE requested budget by any more than what he did.

(ii) Chairman McNally – thanked everyone for coming out and for being respectful.

(iii) Councilor Pike – said he appreciates the feedback and he apologizes as, apparently, everyone knows what’s going on. He reminded everyone he is open to discussion and that all are welcome to contact him at any time.

(iii) Councilor Pollard – reiterated what Councilor Pike said about calling the Councilors any time with questions or for discussion.

(iv) Councilor Rogulski – thanked everyone; said Montville is a great town; his family owns a business in town; taxes are a big problem; he doesn’t expect the economy to grow and sees it as a continuing problem. He said with the aging demographic, minimum wage increases and other things, it will probably get even more challenging.

11. Adjournment - 8:12pm

Motion made by Councilor Rogulski and seconded by Councilor Rogers. All in Favor; 6-0; Motion Carried.

Please refer to the recorded minutes on the Town website for additional details.