

Town of Montville Town Council
Public Hearing Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 24, 2012
7:00 p.m. – Montville Town Hall

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Buebendorf called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. after establishing a quorum.

2. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in honor of our troops.

3. Roll Call

Present were Councilors Caron, Jones, Longton, McFee, Murphy, Tanner and Buebendorf. Also present was Mayor Ron McDaniel.

4. Public Hearing

Chairperson Buebendorf read a summary of the Board of Education 2012-2013 budget public hearing and introduced the Board of Education Chairman, Dave Rowley.

Mr. David Rowley thanked everyone for attending the meeting and turned the microphone over to Superintendent Pam Aubin.

Superintendent Pam Aubin introduced members of the Board of Education and then she narrated a power point presentation that discussed the ways the School Board is proud of the schools in Montville. She commended Heather Holmes at Montville's 2012 Teacher of the Year, she discussed the school being a national model featured by PD360, professional learning visits and practical walkthrough protocol, she discussed the administrative teams and how they work together for a common goal, she discussed how proud she is of the investment in the students and commended Lily Wang, 5th grade student who won the Oakdale Elementary spelling bee, Qing Ge, from the Montville High School who was awarded the prestigious day of Pride Scholarship from the University of Connecticut, she commended the History Day winners, she discussed Rachel's Challenge and the Chain Links Club, the Tyl Robotics Team who won second place at the 2012 Vex Robotics State Championships at Central Connecticut State University, she discussed the Montville High School Boys Baseball Program and their wins this year, the Read to Ride Program at the elementary schools and thanked Councilor Caron for his help with the program over the years, the Montville Education Foundation winner, Bethany Bonner from the Oakdale School, review prior year to identify areas for possible changes in allocation in expenditures and year to date expenditures, assess staff allocations to support adopted programs, stay within recommended class size ranges in accordance with Board Policy, OSHA regulations and projected enrollment. She discussed revenue sources, the Montville Public Schools budget history, major education expenditures including salaries, benefits, supplies/textbooks and equipment, and tuition for the 2012-2013 budget allocation, factors contributing to the 2.72% budget increase are contracted, certified and non certified salaries, unused leave payments, purchased/contracted services, and tuition for a total of a \$1,508,212 increase, she discussed decreases in the proposed budget this fiscal year and cost containment, including employee benefit decreases and decreases in electricity, transportation, property liability and Worker's Compensation, print advertising, gas, oil and diesel costs as a result of converting to natural gas at some of the buildings, and reduced library books for a total reduction of \$513,450. She discussed the commitment to maintain current athletic programs and clubs with no new clubs or sports, provide strong stewardship in facility maintenance and capital improvements and focus on achieving safety, energy efficiency, natural gas and indoor quality, collaboration, effort and cooperation in negotiated collective bargaining agreements with zero percent increases for most employees, she discussed the one time federal grant, stating it must be reinstated this year. She discussed potential cost of a zero percent budget, loss of revenue from Special Education out of District Tuitions, insufficient budgeting and its impact on town revenues such as the excess cost grant, the affects of delayed maintenance, aging bus fleets, inability to keep pace with curriculum refresh cycle, inability to repair or replace broken equipment, staff instability that strains limited

professional development resources and limits the district's ability to recruit and maintain high quality staff. She asked that the Council please support a quality educational program for the Montville community.

Chairperson Buebendorf invited members of the public to come forward to speak regarding the Board of Education budget.

Mr. Rocco Basilica, 7 Hunters Run stated he is in support of the budget this year and he has two sons in the school system and acknowledged the people in the district who work with the students on a daily basis. He stated he is willing to pay more in taxes for the education of his children and he is proud of the schools and urged the Council to support the budget request.

Mr. Orville Cave, 47 Pheasant Run stated he moved to Montville in 2006 because of the great school system. He discussed the population groups in Montville and stated most of the taxpayers moved to this town for its schools. He discouraged any cuts to the music and arts programs and encouraged the Council to approve the Board of Education budget as proposed.

Mr. Matthew Stewart, 16 Evergreen Lane stated the Montville School system is the most important aspect of the town and he chose to move to the town because he is proud of the school system and the teachers and encouraged the Council to approve the Board of Education budget as presented.

Ms. Kathleen Calash, 122 Forsyth Road stated she has five children in the school system and urged them to keep up the teaching staff and to consider no cuts to the programs where kids who need extra services go every day.

Ms. Sheri Albot, 104 Holly Hill Drive stated she is a longtime resident of Montville and her children and grandchildren have attended the Montville schools and urged the Council not to consider cutting teachers from the budget this year.

Ms. Sue Edwards, 45 Gallivan Lane stated she moved to town seventeen years ago because of the Montville education system and she has not been disappointed with this choice. She discussed the school psychologist and the special needs program and urged the Council not to make cuts to the school staff. She read a letter from her son, a senior at the Palmer Academy, who spoke regarding his positive experiences in the school system. He stated in the letter the school psychologist is a positive position for students and to cut the position would be detrimental to every student who attends any of the schools in Montville.

Ms. Michelle DeShong-Cure, 6 Carolina Drive #12 stated her children attended the school system and her grandson is now in the school system and he has ADHD and needs special attention. She discouraged any cuts to teachers in the school system stating the one on one attention is paying off for her grandson and if this is taken away it will be detrimental to the children in the long run. She urged the Council not to lay off any paraprofessionals in the school system.

Ms. Carlie Cave, 47 Pheasant Run, a senior at the Montville High School, stated she is proud to be a Montville Indian. She discussed her experience in the marching band over the years and stated she is proud of the school system and discussed the school psychologist and the importance of this position that has made an impact on so many people. She thanked her teachers for all they do and urged the Council to do whatever they can do to avoid any cuts to staff positions.

Ms. Elise Couillard, 136 Ridge Hill Road, a senior at the Montville High School, discussed the education needed to continue on to college and the necessity of the music program in the school system. She discussed teachers that have made an impact on her life and encouraged the Council to avoid any cuts in the school staff if possible.

Mr. Jeremiah Ross and his daughter, Lauren Ross, 41 Carol Drive spoke regarding their positive experiences in the Montville school system, stating he has stayed in the town because of the

outstanding school system and its great teachers who do a fantastic job for every student. He stated teacher cuts will end up costing the town more in the end, as teachers are committed to making the system work and any cuts will have an impact on the system. They encouraged the Council to pass the budget as presented.

Ms. Hannah Meyers, a Freshman at Montville High School discussed the tough economy and stated she understands cuts need to be made but hopes the cuts are not made to the school staff. She discussed the teachers that have had an impact on her and how losing any of them would be detrimental in so many ways.

Ms. Hannah Sun, 5 Partridge Hollow a freshman at the Montville High School discussed what education means to her and the impact layoffs would have to the school system. She discussed the dedication of the teachers and how they have established a relationship with the students over the years.

Mr. Robert Manfredi, 9 Heather Brook Road, discussed the shortfall of seven million dollars to the budget this year and stated he is representing the seniors in the town and urging the Council not to pass the budget with any tax increases this year. He discussed the average tax hike of a resident in Montville if the budget is passed and the taxes are raised.

Ms. Karen Duhamel, 1 Fox Hollow Drive stated she has two children in the school system and urged the Council and the Mayor to approve the school budget as proposed. She believes there is a way to make the budget work and if it means higher taxes she is willing to pay them to keep the teachers and staff as they are. She discussed the sacrifices the Montville teachers have made with a zero percent increase and the residents of Montville can return the favor by implementing no layoffs in exchange for a superior education. She urged the Council and the Mayor to take a tour of the schools to see what is happening in the school system and the great job the teachers are doing to help justify the increase in the budget this year stating the increases requested are justified and fair.

Ms. Jennifer Sloan, 215 Forsyth Road, a resident of the Town of Montville for nineteen years discussed the superior education her son is receiving in the Montville school system. She discussed the band concert she attended, stating it would be shame to eliminate any music programs as it is a great program that does great things for the students. She stated she appreciates the teachers for taking a zero percent increase in salary over the years and urged the Council to pass the proposed budget as is.

Mr. Steven Bilheimer, 44 Damato Drive urged the Council and the Mayor to approve the budget as presented with the increases necessary to continue giving students a great education as any reduction will impact the students in a detrimental way. He discussed towns in the area that are taken over by the State, stating this town cannot afford to have this happen and an education is the best way to achieve success.

Mr. Doug Craig, 115 Orchard Drive, spoke in favor of accepting the budget with the proposed increases. He spoke against the full day kindergarten proposal and urged the School Board to wait an additional year so the teachers can prepare for the new program instead of figuring it out as they go.

Mr. Kevin Fritch, 12 Morgan Street, thanked the Board for the moment of silence implemented at the beginning of all the Town meeting to honor the troops. He stated he has lived in Montville for twenty five years and asked the Council to take into consideration that seniors are going to have to pay additional taxes if the current proposed school budget is approved. He stated most seniors are on a fixed income and are not in the position to pay additional taxes to support the education system. He does not feel the information presented is in compliance with the Town Charter and if the information is not properly presented and analyzed decisions are made on emotion and not fact. He stated the Town is in decline and with the new revaluation and loss of revenue it is hard to sell homes and he urged the Council to look at other solutions and to save the town, not just the schools. He urged the Council to work with the Board of Education to come up with a better solution.

Mr. Dillon Johnson, 28 Richard Brown Drive, a Sophomore at the Montville High School discussed his experiences at the school in the music program and stated it is a wonderful program that has helped so many students in so many ways. He stated he understands the budget needs cuts but discouraged the Council and the Mayor from cutting special programs at the school, stating it would be cutting the purpose of education.

Ms. Amy Cave, 47 Pheasant Run, discussed the challenges the Town of Montville has gone through in the past years and the lack of stability the schools have experienced. She discussed the renovations of the schools and the need for stability in the schools and asked the Council to keep the staffing stable for the students and give people a reason to come to and stay in The Town of Montville.

Mr. Shane Longo, 61 Noble Hill Road, a Senior at Montville High School, stated he and his parents have or currently are attending the Montville school system. He stated he started as a terrible student who turned into a great student because of the teachers in the school system. He thanked his third grade teacher for the impact she made on his life and encouraged the Council not to cut teachers or staff.

Ms. Jackie Meislitzer, 52 Pheasant Run, urged the Council and Mayor to support the budget as presented, she stated she is an educator and understands the challenges being faced this year. She stated it is important to listen to the students who speak so highly of the teachers who have made an impact to their lives and education. She discussed the importance of the music program and providing opportunities to students and keeping programs available to those who want them.

Ms. Amy Stoudt, 656 Raymond Hill Road, a resident of Montville for twenty years discussed the State requirements for schools and the constant changes being made to meet goals and scores and stated this should be considered when considering cuts to the school budget. She discussed the music program and urged the Council and the Mayor not to cut the music program or staff.

Mr. Rick Gladeau, 44 Cook Drive discussed the average increase in taxes to the average homeowner this year if this budget is passed. He stated it is a bad year for everyone and many people cannot afford to pay the increases if their taxes are raised.

Ms. Danielle Ladia, 112 Forsyth Road discussed the proposed budget, stating she is in favor of passing the budget as presented and urged the Council to consider passing the budget as well. She has children entering the school system and stated she chose Montville for the great school system and is willing to pay more for her children to attend the schools if she has to.

Mr. Andrew Meisliteou stated he has lived in Montville for twelve years and has attended many budget hearings over the years. He stated he is a teacher and knows how difficult it is for teachers trying to give a good education on a budget. He discussed the sacrifices needed to make due but he is not willing to sacrifice on his children's education and urged the Council and the Mayor to approve the budget as presented.

Councilor Tanner read an email from Mr. Tony Siragusa who discussed the proposed budget, grants, the economy, the increase in taxes, the drop in property values, estimated taxes for average homeowners, and the need for more revenue to the town.

Mr. Keith Truex, 1046 East Lake Road stated he is a resident of the Town of Montville who has several children in the school system discussed the budget request and inquired how many dollars the tax payers can afford to pay in increases if the Board of Education budget it passed. He stated his daughter is in the band and has achieved high honors due to the great teachers and programs in the town and the music department has done a great job over the years. He stated there are many seniors in the town who will not be able to afford tax increases and urged the Council to split the difference, he urged everyone to look at the budget again to make cuts without cutting staff and programs if possible.

Mr. Robert Stoodt spoke regarding sports and music programs in the schools and how they impact the students who utilize them. He urged the Council not to make cuts to vital programs.

Ms. Alisha Gilbride, a 2011 graduate at Montville High School discussed her experiences during the school years she attended. She attributed music to her success in high school and a reason to get up and go to school and urged the Council not to cut any programs in the school system.

Ms. Marissa Florio spoke in favor of keeping the music department, stating she enjoys the program and it has helped her so much along the way. She urged the Council not to eliminate the music department or any of the teachers.

Ms. Lee Tighe, a parent of children in the school system thanked the Council for rescheduling the meeting to allow everyone to speak regarding the budget. She discussed her children and their academic status in the school system. She stated everyone needs to find their own passion and she urged the Council not to eliminate the music department or staff.

Mr. Matthew Vella, a student at Montville High spoke regarding saving the music program, stating he is dedicated to his school and his favorite part of the day is his choir class. He urged the Council to keep the program for the students who benefit from the program every day.

Councilor Gary Murphy, 6 Carolina Drive stated several members of the Town Council have children and grandchildren who attend the Montville schools and he has family members who have received pink slips from the schools. He indicated he is a member of the Board of Finance and stated the Council will look at the budget objectively and they will do the best they can to come to an acceptable conclusion and to be fair to everyone. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and speaking regarding the budget.

Chairperson Buebendorf asked three times if there was anyone from the public who would like to come forward to address the Council.

5. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Tanner, seconded by Councilor Longton to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 p.m., Discussion, none, voice vote, 7-0, all in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Audrey Ulmer, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville.