

**Town of Montville Town Council
Special Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Montville Town Hall – Council Chambers**

Town of Montville has lifted the mask mandate effective Monday, February 28, 2022 throughout Town facilities in coordination with our schools. Although the mask mandate has been lifted, Uncas Health strongly recommends that all individuals, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, continue to wear masks indoors.

1. Call to Order
Chairman McNally called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
Present were Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Mandler (*via speakerphone*), May (*via speakerphone*), Yuchniuk, and McNally. Also present was Mayor Ronald McDaniel.
4. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit
Jeremiah Ross, 41 Carol Drive, Uncasville, spoke in support of establishing an Independent Police Department. He hopes that the citizens understand that this is what the town needs.
Mike Tomaszek, 38 Lathrop Road, Uncasville, expressed his support for an Independent Police Department. As a Real Estate Agent, he stated that the younger generation researches every aspect of the towns they are considering making their home much more than in years prior. A town with an independent police department, rather than a constabulary force, tends to provide them with a sense of safety and security they seek for themselves and/or family.
Lisa Mongillo, 113 Park Avenue, Uncasville, spoke in opposition to the establishment of an Independent Police Department. She questioned why the Town Council is deciding on the matter, rather than by referendum, as per usual. She felt that Montville was a very safe town as a constabulary police department.
William Bucko, 106 Wildwood Lane, Uncasville, spoke in support of an Independent Police Department. As a former member of both the Public Safety Building Committee and the Montville Law Enforcement Feasibility (MLEF) Committee, he stated that the building was built and has been ready to accommodate an independent police department for ten years. Similarly, it was felt by the MLEF Committee that it would be beneficial to the town to establish an independent police force. He questioned whether a Committee would be established to review the candidates for the Chief of Police position. He thanked the Town Council for their time and for thinking forward.
Brian Devine, 1650 Old Colchester Road, Oakdale, expressed his support for an Independent Police Department. He stated that the town currently pays for the police department, its services, and facilities and did not understand why the town continues to pay for a Resident State Trooper. The money saved could be utilized to serve the town's other needs.
Joseph Harvey, 49 Vartelas Drive, Uncasville, expressed his support for an Independent Police Department. He concurred with Mr. Devine's statement regarding the underutilization of the facility and allocation of funds to other resources.
Micah Messer, 168 Chapel Hill Road, Oakdale, stated his support for an Independent Police Department.

Al Ouellette, Jr., 401 Kitemaug Road, Uncasville, also expressed his support for an Independent Police Department. He felt that it was past due and would be a good opportunity for the town to utilize the services and facilities it has already invested in.

Deonn Bunnell, 5 Little John Drive, Uncasville, expressed her support for the establishment of an Independent Police Department, stating that she would like to see an end to the revolving door of Resident State Troopers.

Leon Wrobel, 308 Fitch Hill Road, Uncasville, expressed his support for an Independent Police Department and a Police Chief. He felt it was long overdue and it was time to do the right thing.

John Chase, 1011 Route 163, Oakdale, spoke in favor of Item 6(a) regarding the establishment of the Montville Police Department and 6(f) regarding the timeline. He also believed it was time and commended Chairman McNally for bringing the item forward. One of the issues raised in the past was the cost of the facilities – which has since been resolved. It is now time to take advantage of the facility that was designed and constructed for this purpose. He also commented on the past prestige of towns that were associated with the Resident State Trooper program and surmised that that might no longer be the case. Based on the existing staff, the hiring of a highly qualified Police Chief, and the ensuing morale and confidence the change would bring, it was now time to move forward.

Jessica Harvey, 49 Vartelas Drive, Uncasville, also expressed her support for an Independent Police Department. Ms. Harvey has resided in the town for over 35 years and felt that an independent police department was past due.

Carol Rowley, 93 Driscoll Drive, Uncasville, also stated her support for an Independent Police Department. Based on the Mayor's statement regarding his lack of qualifications to act as the Chief of Police for the town, she felt that an independent police department would ensure that all of its members would be qualified.

Mike Butterworth, 128 Connecticut Boulevard, Oakdale, spoke in support of an Independent Police Department. He reminisced about the police force when he first moved to the town and the support they provided. He felt that an independent police department would only enhance how they respond and work together. The current department is not progressive and is stagnant with no room for the officers to grow. He felt that, for the number of officers they have in the town, it should no longer be under the Resident State Trooper Program.

Nage Wong, 39 Dydo Drive, Uncasville, expressed his support for an Independent Police Department. His family has resided in the town for over 70 years and concurred with Mr. Butterworth's statement. While he honors and respects the State Police, he felt it was time for the town's police department to grow and become independent.

Montville Police Department Lieutenant David Radford, 33 Glen Crag Place, Uncasville, stated the support of the members of the Police Department and its Union for the Ordinance. He expressed his appreciation to the Town Council and the community for their support.

Nicholas Keller 84 Occum Lane, Uncasville, spoke in favor of an Independent Police Department.

Mike Desautels, 237 Chesterfield Road, Oakdale, a 20-year resident of the town, spoke in favor of the establishment of an Independent Police Department.

Public Safety Commission Chairman Gary Murphy, 55-F Laurel Point Drive, stated the Commission's support of the establishment of an Independent Police Department. He stated that some of the differences would include the additional hiring of dispatchers and a

Police Chief. He felt that the Police Chief would be more responsive to the needs of the Town Council, Public Safety Commission, and residents of the town. Based on the amount of activity he hears on police radios and scanners, he felt that the town is a draw on the resources of the State Police. The town has the facilities, very good officers, and the necessary leadership to move forward and make this happen.

Chairman McNally asked three times if there were any additional members of the public wishing to speak. There being none, the public comment portion of the meeting was closed.

6. New Business

- a. **Resolution #2022-121. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to approve the ordinance titled “Ordinance Establishing the Montville Police Department” as heard at the Public Hearing held on Monday, September 12, 2022 at 6:00 PM in the Town Council Chambers at Montville Town Hall. (Councilor McNally)

Motion made by Councilor Bunnell, seconded by Councilor Yuchniuk. Discussion: Chairman McNally stated that, several years ago, he was opposed to the establishment of an independent police department due to the cost. At the time, the town did not have a facility or clear transition plan. The town now has a Public Safety Building which has been designed and equipped to house an independent police department and a very detailed transition plan. In addition, the passing of the Ordinance would allow the town to qualify for several grants which would help offset the costs. Furthermore, the transition would help relieve some of the burdens placed on the State Police, which now numbers approximately 400 Officers. Establishing an independent police department would also allow for better accountability, and consistency, improved morale, a quicker turnaround time for responses and filling of FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests, and enhanced the dispatching system. He reiterated his support for the Ordinance and implored his fellow Councilors to do the same. Councilor Bunnell informed the public that flyers are available on the back table stating the benefits of the town’s establishment of an Independent Police Department. In addition, he stated that the residents of the town voted in favor of constructing a \$6.5 million full-service facility. He believed that those who voted in favor of the facility were aware of its intended use. He encouraged everyone to tour the building, a portion of which has been sitting vacant for ten years. Councilor Caron thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed his support for the Ordinance. He commended the police officers and agreed that it was time to move forward. Councilor Rix expressed her support and concerns regarding the cost of the transition. Councilor Yuchniuk also stated his support and that it is well past time to have an independent police department with a Police Chief who is accountable to the town and offers the stability the department and the town deserve. Councilor Mandler felt that the townspeople, who elected them to speak and represent them have spoken. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Mandler, May, Rix, Yuchniuk, and McNally. Voting in Opposition: None.

- b. **Resolution #2022-122. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to approve the ordinance titled “An Ordinance Regarding the Conveyance of Fort Shantok Road (East), Sunny Hill Drive and a Portion of Shantok Heights Road” as heard at the Public Hearing held on Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 6:00 PM in the Town Council Chambers at Montville Town Hall. (Councilor McNally)

Motion made by Councilor Rix, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Mandler, May, Rix, Yuchniuk, and McNally. Voting in Opposition: None.

- c. **Resolution #2022-123. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to allocate \$10,000.00 (ten thousand dollars) of the of the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds to the gravel parking lot adjacent to the Public Safety Building. (Councilor McNally)

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Rix. Discussion: Chairman McNally stated that the gravel parking lot will accommodate the new walking trail.

Roll Call vote, 6-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Mandler, Rix, Yuchniuk, and McNally. Voting in Opposition: None.

- d. **Resolution #2022-124. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to approve an additional appropriation for \$45,000.00 (forty-five thousand dollars) to Line Item 10910-54000, Public Works, Equipment, for the purchase of a tractor with a cab for Camp Oakdale from General Fund. (Councilor McNally)

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Bunnell. Discussion: The funds that were returned by the Public Works Department from their FY2021/22 budget will be utilized to purchase the tractor. The funding was approved by the Public Works/Solid Waste and Finance Standing Committees. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor.

Voting in Favor: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Mandler, May, Rix, Yuchniuk, and McNally. Voting in Opposition: None.

- e. **Resolution #2022-125. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to authorize Mayor Ron McDaniel to sell the property located at 141 Lake Drive East, Oakdale, CT, which received an Unfavorable §8-24 Review from the Planning & Zoning Commission. (Councilor McNally)

Motion made by Councilor Rix, seconded by Councilor Bunnell. Discussion: The property contains an abandoned home. One of the members of the Planning & Zoning Commission felt that the property could be utilized for the location of a future pump station for the WPCA (Water Pollution Control Authority). However, after speaking with the WPCA Superintendent, it was found that the location of the property was not conducive and there are no plans to utilize the property at this time. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Mandler, May, Rix, Yuchniuk, and McNally. Voting in Opposition: None.

- f. **Resolution #2022-126. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to approve the implementation of the timeline for the transition from a Constabulary Police Department to an Independent Police Department. (Councilor McNally)

Motion made by Councilor Yuchniuk, seconded by Councilor Bunnell. Discussion: The timeline includes a checklist of items to be completed before finalizing the establishment of an Independent Police Department by July 1, 2023. Councilor Bunnell expressed his support for the timeline, which he felt was very responsible and reasonable. Mayor McDaniel also expressed his support for the implementation timeline, noting that some of the items might be moved to the right. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Mandler, May, Rix, Yuchniuk, and McNally. Voting in Opposition: None.

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

William Bucko, 106 Wildwood Lane, Uncasville, questioned when the timeline would be published such that the public could be apprised of its progress.

8. Remarks from the Councilors and the Mayor

Mayor McDaniel was pleased that the Ordinance to establish a Montville Police Department was passed and that the roads have been completed. He also informed the

Councilors that resumé's of candidates to fill some of the vacant positions were handed to the Chairman for review; he requested that the process be expedited.

Councilor Bunnell also expressed his concerns regarding the costs of the transition to an independent police department but felt that, unlike that of the Resident State Trooper which currently costs \$240,000.00, those costs would be controllable by the Town Council.

Councilor Caron agreed with both Councilors Rix and Bunnell and stated that they would do their best to ensure that the costs are favorable for both the officers and townspeople.

Chairman McNally thanked everyone for attending the meeting. As the Chairman of the Finance Committee, he reported that the cost of the additional staffing (with benefits) was reviewed and it is estimated that an additional \$140,000.00 to \$150,000.00 would be needed for the transition. The final cost would be offset by savings in other areas, including grants that the town would now qualify for. He ensured the public that the costs would be monitored.

Councilor Yuchniuk concurred, adding that the additional costs would be offset by Federal and State Grants that the town would now qualify for. He thanked everyone for attending this evening's meeting and providing their input.

Councilor Mandler stated that the residents have spoken and it is their job to act on their behalf.

Councilor May stated that they have been working on the Ordinance for a long time and thanked the Chairman for reviving it. He also thanked them for allowing him to join the meeting remotely.

9. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Bunnell, to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville

AN AUDIO RECORD OF THE MEETING CAN BE FOUND ON THE TOWN'S WEBSITE LOCATED UNDER RESOURCES – MEETING RECORDINGS