

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes – March 20, 2022 – 6:00 p.m.

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. Comments will only be accepted at times designated for public comment by the Chair of the meeting. The Montville Town Council Rules of Procedure, decorum, timeliness, and suitability shall be followed and enforced.

1) Call to Order

Chairman Gillette called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

3) Roll Call

Present were Commissioners Sierra Davis, Mickey Gillette, Walter Hewitt (by phone), Sheelagh Lapinski, Meracus Hernandez (6:38 p.m.), and Christopher Napierski. Absent was Commissioner Thomas McCarthy.

Also present was Town Planner Liz Burdick and Town Council Liaison Robert Yuchniuk. Representatives Paul Whitescarver and R. T. Brown from seCTer were also present.

4) Alterations to the Agenda -- *None*

5) Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (3-minute limit)

Chairman Gillette asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

6) To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve:

a) The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 19, 2022.

Motion by Commissioner Lapinski; seconded by Commissioner Davis to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2022. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 5-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

7) Unfinished Business

a) Improve Business Awareness: Discussion of business survey results

Town Planner Burdick reported the receipt of one (1) new business survey response. The responder, a long-time, area animal hospital/veterinarian, wants to expand its location, stay in Montville, and to see the repair of rundown areas on Route 32. The other four (4) survey results spoke of the following: support for new buildings on Route 32, promotion of small businesses, sharing businesses with residents in Town, featuring a business of week with information on its services on a table in the Town Hall lobby; and posting information for free on the Town website or a local paper. Emphasis was also expressed for more bus transportation

in Town. Town Planner Burdick reviewed all of these responses reported as being “good ones” and will reach out to those who wish to stay in town to determine their exact needs and spoke of putting together a list of commercial properties in Town—an inventory of ones for sale. Commissioner Davis commented on Route 32 businesses, potential fairs at the Department of Labor, and businesses that offer food. Furthermore, there are not a lot of available buildings; most are older and not a great fit. Town Planner Burdick remarked on the reconstruction of the DOL building by the State and a grant through the Council of Governments (COG) for sidewalks from the Waterford town line along Route 32 whereby the State will choose the top three (3) applicants. Also mentioned was a resurgence of additional apartments being added in Town and the lost businesses at the Montville Commons due to Covid.

b) Welcome New Businesses: Review of Business Report

Chairperson Gillette welcomed the new Town businesses from December 2022 – March 2023—Upscale Barbershop, Wear with me Creations, Let’s Go Travel, LLC, and MAD Crafts.

c) Recognition of Businesses

1. Discussion of Presentation of Excellence Award

Town Planner Burdick was given an update by Asst. Planner Bezanson concerning the Waterford business used for the awards. For her benefit, Chairman Gillette noted the criteria for the awards—the award recipient must be a brick and mortar business in Town, that promotes, sponsors, or donates to the Town; or beautified its location. Feedback from local individuals is also considered. Commissioner Davis noted the Waterford business was chosen for the award and a quote was provided by that businesses for the award. Commissioner Lapinski cropped the verbiage for the plaque; the Town Planner asked that it be sent to her as the Asst. Planner would be out for eight (8) weeks. The Town Planner noted having more staff soon. Commissioner Davis stated the Waterford plaque business as Sportees and remarked a request must be made to the Town Council for presentation of the award in addition to notifying the award recipient and having Commission members present as well.

2. New Business Introductory Letter

Town Planner Burdick read a draft of the business introductory letter to be signed by Chairman Gillette. Commissioner Napierski mentioned proposed changes to business listings as discussed by the Commission specifically business contact information and email addresses that are subject to change. He also inquired whether new businesses would automatically be included on the business listing since some may not have been in business long enough to complete a survey. Town Planner Burdick commented on applications for home businesses stating they must have a tradename certificate issued by the Town Clerk for which there is no charge. The Town Planner’s office would then determine whether the business is allowed by law.

8) New Business:

1) Staff Updates: Planning and Zoning Commission applications update

Town Planner Burdick updated the Commission on P & Z applications, approved and pending to date. It was also reported there would be a moratorium on cannabis establishments in Town for six (6) months for development of regulations for these businesses. Currently, there are no regulations in place nor State requirements. It was suggested that the Commission research the protocol for these establishments in other towns that are considered to be zoned industrial or light industrial. The P & Z Commission is not in favor of having these businesses in

residential areas nor has an application for a license been sought. This topic will be set for hearing before Planning & Zoning at its April meeting.

2) Discussion of CPACE Letters to owners of multi-family buildings with 5 or more units. Town Planner Burdick there was a list of multi-family building owners and a request that one (1) of the properties be removed. Asst. Planner Bezanson sent the letters out on the 14th.

3) seCTer – Paul Whitescarver, Executive Director – Presentation and discussion of seCTer as staff support to Montville EDC.

P. Whitescarver who presented before the Commission a year ago compiled some economic data for the Town of Montville. seCTer does economic strategy for the region that allows it to be a district in order to apply for grants. It is also affiliated with State organizations such Connecticut Municipal Cities and Towns, Connecticut Main Street Council, and as a sister organization to the Council of Governments (COG). He described himself as a former veteran with the Sub Base in Groton that owned several businesses, the last thing he did in the Navy. With seCTer, he attends a lot of local EDC meetings and found that a lot of municipalities do not take advantage. Board goals were mentioned that require support—workforce and declining housing and ways in which to bring back 18 year old residents, an age that is declining, to Town as well as people and businesses on Route 32. The question, “How do I do it?” was asked. Notably, affordable housing is not listed on the Town website. Town Planner Burdick gave data on the same stating the addition of 50 apartments will get the Town off the list for a few years. SEAT bus transportation use and other data can be pulled by seCTer to pinpoint Town weaknesses and the Town webpage can be used to support its efforts. Vacant buildings not in use should warrant identifying and speaking with their owners. Other considerations include promoting business success on the Town website with the Business Excellence Award. Another factor would be to determine the role of the EDC; Commissioner Gillette reported the Commission has no power but can provide information to help people acquire resources. Also, the Commission has no staff and is volunteer-based.

Minimizing the EDC role as a connector was discouraged by R. T. Brown who indicated in the last four (4) months small business and other forms of business are emerging and he gave kudos to the Commission for its business survey. Town Planner Burdick remarked on possibly finding funds for consultants to put ideas together for site selections—the EDC has the power to get the word out. Chairman Gillette provided feedback on potential Town opportunities sought by the Commission that were longshots that did not come to fruition. The drive-in property has had developers over the years but the owner family of the property has not been able to come to an agreement per the Town Planner. Her proposal was to focus on the people who will speak with the Commission and using Planning & Zoning as its guide source for interested parties through its meetings and its website for the best interests of the Town. A question was posed by Chairman Gillette concerning seCTer contact with the Army Corps of Engineers and the ability to have fire suppression on Route 85: Town Planner Burdick remarked on water for the same at the Industrial Park but no public water or sewer in addition to the prior Route 85 plan for improvement and the potential for widening it for traffic. R. T. Brown reported on State funding available a while ago relative to small businesses to provide technical assistance, business advertisement, and funding that does not require repayment for minority, veterans, distressed area, and missed compliance businesses. Attendance at a workshop for this funding is require that factors back to recovery and business resilience.

P. Whitescarver referenced availability of the Boost Fund, a State loan fund at a 4.5% interest rate or nontraditional loans if bank qualified loan is denied. Telephone calls per month by potential business owners were few per the Town Planner. P. Whitescarver proposed a focus on the addition of successful businesses that can be made more successful. There was input by the Commission and the Town Councilor on trying to procure businesses that are turned away by the casino. It was suggested that the Commission have a good strategy in place to deal with these types of concerns. R. T. Brown suggested a community visit, a visualization exercise, to bring stakeholders together to determine priorities for the Commission and devise points to codify them. Commissioner Davis recognized the power of referral as being important and the Town having chased big fish with nothing to show for it. She provided data on her Town business since its inception in 2011 and proposed helping businesses who want to remain in Montville to expand and embrace the Town identity of being a pass-through entity by marketing and tailoring to its smaller businesses. Town Planner Burdick reported on the dock activity, her proposal for a RFP for a consultant, the Plan of Conservation and Development, staffing needs, and guidance from seCTer.

9) Report from Town Council Liaison

Town Councilor Yuchniuk reported he really liked the idea of having a business week and a display table for it at the Town Hall. It is a great idea to recognize businesses and to get people talking. He noted there is a business table display at Stop & Shop. Town Planner Burdick remarked on having an EDC member and a rented display space at the Farmers Market with a popup tent and folding table. Ideas for the next meeting were requested.

10) Remarks from the Public (3-minute limit)

Chairman Gillette asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

11) Remarks from the Commissioners and Town Council Liaison. -- *None*

12) Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Davis; seconded by Commissioner Hernandez to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 p.m. Voice vote: 6-0, all in favor. Motion carried.