

**Town of Montville Town Council
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 6:30 p.m.
Montville High School – Auditorium**

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 Leonard Bunnell, Sr., Billy Caron, Alfred Mandler, Tim May, Robert Yuchniuk, Thomas McNally. Absent was Councilor Colleen Rix. Also present was Mayor Ronald McDaniel.
4. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit
Animal Control Officer (ACO) Christian Swanson, spoke concerning item 5(b) regarding the Animal Control Facility and urged the Town Council to move forward on the project. Over the past 13 years that she has served as the town's ACO, she has witnessed the drastic decline of the facility, which was constructed during the 1950s. The facility has consistently failed its inspections over the last five to six years; some of the items were grandfathered in due to its age. The building is now becoming infested with birds due to large cracks in the walls and some of the animals have sustained injury due to large cracks in the concrete.
5. New Business
 - a. **Resolution #2023-42. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to accept the recommendation of the Mayor and the Director of School Facilities to reallocate funding in the Montville High School Project Bonding Authorization to cover the full costs of the Tennis Court Replacement Project and allocate any remaining funding to the track replacement. (Mayor McDaniel)

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Yuchniuk. Discussion: Mayor McDaniel stated that the Board of Education (BOE) received a higher cost estimate for the tennis courts than originally anticipated and is requesting that the funds be reallocated. BOE Chairman Wills Pike stated that the BOE has agreed to hire the same firm that the town is using. The original allocated amount was \$750,000.00 and is now \$800,000.00. The ability to reallocate the funds was confirmed by Bond Counsel. Roll Call vote, 6-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Mandler, May, Yuchniuk, and McNally. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.
6. **THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to authorize the Finance Director to go to bid for the proposed new Animal Control Facility and to self-fund the amount over the \$700k set aside in ARPA funds until next spring whereas the self-funding will be reimbursed by a bond or note as recommended by the Finance Committee. (Councilor McNally)

Motion made by Councilor Yuchniuk, seconded by Councilor Mandler. Discussion: Chairman McNally stated that the Animal Control Facility has been discussed over the past ten (10) years, including the possibility of the regionalization of facilities. The town's Bond debt will be considerably reduced over the next two years and the cost of the facility can be rolled into the existing School and Road Bonds, avoiding any

additional fees. Councilor Bunnell stated that he was a member of the group that reviewed the Norwich and New London Animal Control facilities with the possibility of sharing their facility through Mutual Aid. The start-up cost for a joint facility with New London was approximately \$400,000.00, with an annual \$30,000.00 fee. During this period, the price of a new facility has risen from \$800,000.00 to \$2 million. He felt that the town should revisit the possibility of sharing a facility with New London. While he agreed that the facility is deplorable and past due, he opposed the Resolution due to its cost. Councilor Yuchniuk reiterated the disgraceful condition of the facility as outlined by ACO Swanson, adding that the cats are housed in cages with the dogs and the facility is not large enough to accommodate all of the animals. State Representative Kathleen McCarty is seeking grant funding for the project, which could be lost should they partner with New London. He stated the possibility of the state ordering the closure of the shelter due to its condition. He urged his colleagues to vote in favor of the Resolution and immediately resolve the issue; the price will only continue to increase. Councilor May, who was not opposed to the Resolution, stated that the process of investigating their Mutual Aid possibilities was never completed which, he felt, is a disservice to the taxpayers who would be funding the project. He felt that further investigation should be conducted into the possibility of regionalizing the facility as well as the costs of maintaining a new facility. They should have a full picture and be better informed before moving forward with the project. Councilor Caron, who was also not opposed to the Resolution, felt that additional information is needed and the item should be brought before the residents to vote on the matter. Chairman McNally stated that the only feasible solution at the time was to regionalize with New London and it was decided that it would not be a cost-effective solution over time. In addition, the time, fuel, control, and inconvenience of transporting and housing the animals in New London made the solution unfeasible. The issue has been discussed for up to 15 years and should be immediately resolved. Councilor Mandler stated that their goal is to build a facility for the future that would last, at minimum, 50 years. He expressed his sadness at viewing the suffering of the animals that are housed in the current facility and felt that it was immoral to “keep kicking the can down the road.” Councilor May felt that they should do their due diligence for the taxpayers of the town and ensure that they have reviewed all of the possible options. It was confirmed that a mini-split unit was installed and has been running poorly due to the condition of the facility. Councilor Yuchniuk did not feel that the item, which has been in discussion for several years, was being rushed through and provided a brief background of its history. He also stated that the facilities in Waterford and East Lyme are not regionalized. Rather each town conducts its own business and merely shares the building. Mayor McDaniel clarified that the regionalization of ACO Services was never discussed, only a Regional Facility. Roll Call vote, 3-3. Voting in Favor: Councilors Mandler, Yuchniuk, and McNally. Voting in Opposition: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, and May. Resolution failed.

7. Remarks from the Public with a three-minute limit – *none*

8. Remarks from the Councilors and the Mayor

Mayor McDaniel reminded the Councilors to be aware of the deadline dates for the allocation and expenditure of the ARPA Funds when the funding is determined.

Councilor May reiterated that all of the numbers should be evident and looks forward to seeing the item on their May Regular Meeting Agenda.

Councilor Bunnell agreed that their decision should be based on the final estimated numbers. They should also seek the receipt of updated figures on the possible use of the New London Facility.

Chairman McNally expressed his disappointment and reiterated the importance of addressing the issue as soon as possible. The project will go out to bid and a decision can be made whether to close the facility or build a new facility.

Councilor Yuchniuk also expressed his disappointment as they continue to “kick the can down the road”.

Councilor Mandler stated that, since his appointment, he has never been disappointed with his position and the decisions they have made until this evening.

9. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Mandler, seconded by Councilor Caron, to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 p.m. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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