

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Parks & Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting – May 17, 2023 -- 6:30 p.m.
Town Council Chambers

MEETING MINUTES

Comments will only be accepted at times designated for public comments 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.

Chairperson Southard began the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. Roll Call.

Present were Commissioners Matt Beaupre, Noah Carver, Jon Chase (6:07 p.m.), Mary Hillman, Morgan Matthewson, Deborah Schober, Kate Southard, and Rocky Stone. Commissioner Kevin Clang was absent. A quorum was present.

Town Council Liaison Lenny Bunnell was also present.

4. Adjustments to the Agenda. – *None*

5. Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (3-minute limit). -- *None*

6. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve:

- a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of April 19, 2023.

Motion by Commissioner Carver; seconded by Commissioner Beaupre to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of April 19, 2023. Discussion: Chairperson Southard confirmed for the record that Commissioner Chase was absent from this meeting. Voice vote: 8-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

7. Recreation Director's Report May 2023.

Chairperson Southard reported that Director Bushway was away on vacation and summarized his report for the record. Commissioner Stone remarked on the status of the accessible playground per his call with Public Works Director John Carlson. One (1) of the new posts for the large pavilion was damaged by the crew and the accessible playground is 2-3 weeks from being finished. A sidewalk needs to be built and it is unclear whether the playground can open for use without it. Chairperson Southard also reported the Summer Camp was moved from Tyl due to a boiler replacement to the high school where issues will be resolved concerning outdoor play, the status of the tennis/pickleball courts, and near completion of interviews for summer camp counselor positions. Also confirmed was the potential release of

the list of bands for the Summer Concert Series; in addition, three (3) high school bands will perform at the Carnival for which more food trucks are being sought.

8. Report from Finance.

Commissioner Beaupre inquired about the line item transfers recently approved by the Commission for negative balance line items. Chairperson Southard noted the focus of the Finance Committee on the FY2023-2024 budget; she will have Director Bushway follow up on the line item transfers with Finance. Commissioner Stone remarked on the Department budget cuts of \$900,000 i.e., pickleball court (\$100,000), basketball court reconstruction (\$300,000), plans for refurbishment of the Community Center (\$100,000), and repairs of the large pavilion (\$400,000) as mentioned at last month's meeting that equate to zero Department CIP funding for FY2023-2024. He noted all these funds were cut with the exception of \$300,000 for the basketball court that was removed from the Mayor's budget at last night's Town Council meeting. Commissioner Stone remarked that the lack of CIP Department funds for the upcoming fiscal year is disgraceful. Commissioner Chase noted funds were available from an alternative source for completion of the tennis courts. The plans from the Committee Center Subcommittee will be discussed at the next Commission meeting per Commissioner Stone. Commissioner Beaupre noted there was not a request for Commission input in the past concerning budget cuts and presumed they were handled by the Finance Committee. Town Councilor Bunnell remarked that he would get an answer for the Commission about the CIPs for FY2024-2025 and FY2025-2026 and report on it at the next Commission meeting. Chairperson Southard noted the repairs needed for the large pavilion and discussed at ARPA meetings—the column and roof repairs and painting—and trusts that they will be completed.

9. June Newsletter.

Chairperson Southard will have Director Bushway make changes to the Farmers Market article information on the newsletter. Commissioner Stone also suggested having Commissioner Hillman added as well.

10. Parks and Facilities

a. Gate at Camp Oakdale Athletic Facility/Handicap Parking

Chairperson Southard reported on a phone call she got at the beginning of May from Town Councilor Mandler who was at the field parked in a handicapped spot and found a woman lying on the field. He questioned why handicap parking was so far away from the field. Chairperson Southard had hoped that Town Councilor Mandler would be present this evening but did speak with the Public Works Director Carlson and Director Bushway. Town Councilor Mandler asked why the gate is closed and wants it to be left open. The Commission discussed the location of handicap parking at the field; one (1) near the basketball court that would require a walk to the football field as parking is not allowed on that road. It was understood the road was blocked to accommodate emergency access for ambulances. The handicapped parking spots near the middle field were removed for pedestrian traffic. A question was raised concerning State laws on handicap spaces and parking near the gate. Town Councilor Bunnell noted there is a handicap ramp near the gate but it is too far from one end of the area. The

Public Works Director offered to add two (2) handicap spaces closer to the soccer field. Enforcement of parking and gate access in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for group

use of fields is a strong consideration given they are supplied a key for the gate. Town Councilor Bunnell also reported that Director Bushway met with the Town insurance carrier who indicated it was not a good idea to have the gate remain open. Access for motorized devices was also discussed. Opening the gate would also mean that people would be accessing it who are not handicapped. Temporary speeds blocks were also mentioned in addition to history as to implementation of the gate and the factors for closing its access. Potential areas for additional handicapped spaces were discussed—Field 7 that has six (2) spots but room for two (2) more, and are that is currently blocked. The slight cost for improvement for a reasonable request for additional handicap spots was mentioned. Designating areas and posting them as no parking zones is an option supported by State statute to impose a fine. It was noted that the MOA should include a requirement that the gate be closed for parking and enforced by the organizations who access the facility.

b. Lists of Parks Improvements

Chairperson Southard reported the list of parks improvements was given to Public Works Director Carlson and last year's list was also included. The list will be emailed to the Town Council. She was happy to report that several items on the list had already been completed noting the progress of maintaining Department facilities. Kudos was given to the Public Works Department for their initiative getting tasks completed; Commissioner Chase concurred and praised them as well. Discussion will be had with Director Carlson as to items on the list that can be done fairly soon and those that would be classified as CIP projects.

11. Unfinished Business.

a. Montville Carnival 2023

Commissioner Matthewson reported the plans for the Carnival are looking good but volunteers will be needed. A high school band will play on Friday and Saturday nights. There will also be a working Ferris wheel, fried dough available, and a rock climbing wall. At the next subcommittee meeting space will be mapped out for additional items. Commissioner Stone apologized for not having attended meetings.

b. Summer Concert Series

Chairperson Southard reported on the summer concert series that will begin on Thursday, June 29th starting at 6:30 p.m. She met with Bill Bauer last week and remarked their band lineup is the best in the area.

c. Farmers Market 2023

Chairperson Southard reported the Farmers Market season would begin in a month and noted there have been a lot of vendors who expressed interest that had to be capped thus turning some vendors away. Opening night is June 13, 2023 from 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.

12. New Business -- *None*

13. Communications.

Commissioner Stone reported on speaking with Jim Beaupre about how to have a successful playground and having a communication board on it. Commissioner Beaupre noted the communication board is good for kids with communication issues. There are several options for communication boards with the most expensive at a cost of \$1,600. Commissioner Stone remarked that with a small amount of money the communication board would enhance the playground area. Commissioner Chase suggested that the communication board be permanently mounted. Chairperson Southard spoke on information she and Commissioner Stone received from Director Bushway about having cement cornhole boards that weigh 800 lbs. each and spoke about the potential cost for shipping. Commissioner Schober asked whether it could be a project for the Boy Scouts to develop the molds. Commissioner Chase remarked it would require someone with technical skills and proposed having a stainless steel cornhole board bolted to a cement pad and noted an optional spot where the horseshoe courts are now located. Commissioner Beaupre remarked at least two (2) sets would be needed.

14. Remarks from the Public of Non-Agenda items (3-minute limit).

Chairperson Southard asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

15. Remarks from Town Council Liaison Bunnell.

Town Councilor Bunnell reported on the very difficult budget season and votes for items added for ARPA funding. He also reported on the increase to the Board of Education budget of several million dollars and some for the general budget that will increase the mill rate by 1.06%. He noted the budget season for next year will be worse given use of the fund balance, the use of ARPA funds of \$2 million, \$200,000 from cannabis proceeds that went to the BOE; and use of funds for reoccurring expenses, the cusp for concern. Town Councilor Bunnell reiterated he would meet with the Finance Department concerning the status of all Department CIP projects; will meet with Public Works Director Carlson on the parking, safety, gate issue at the athletic field; and would work to make more concrete the Memorandum of Agreement (“MOA”) and the responsibilities of the groups who sign them.

16. Remarks from Parks & Recreation Director Bushway. -- *None*

17. Remarks from the Commissioners.

Chairperson Southard remarked on the appointment of Mary Hillman to the Commission on Monday night and her interest to be a part of it; Commissioner Stone remarked he worked with her on the Montville Athletic Group. Commissioner Matthewson welcomed Commissioner Hillman noting the Commission is a body of volunteers who all play well in the sand. Commissioner Beaupre welcomed Commissioner Hillman to the club and remarked on the favorable impression of the new fences and cleanup on Route 163 giving kudos to Public Works. Commissioner Schroder welcomed Commissioner Hillman. Commissioner Carver welcomed Commissioner Hillman and remarked the Commission was not as bad as some claim. Commissioner Chase welcomed Commissioner Hillman, echoed the facilities improvements and his advocacy for the best interests of the Department, and thanked Town

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Councilor Bunnell for his hard work with the Department budget. Commissioner Hillman thanked the Commission for its welcome.

18. Adjournment.

Motion by Commissioner Carver seconded by Commissioner Matthewson to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 8-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,
Gloria J. Gathers
Town of Montville -- Recording Secretary/Minutes Clerk

**AN AUDIO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE ON
THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WEBSITE.**