

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes – March 18, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

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

1) Call to Order

Chairperson Gillette called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

3) Roll Call

Present were Chairperson Mickey Gillette (by phone), Vice-Chair Serg St. Felix, Commissioners Walter Hewitt (by phone) and Sheelagh Lapinski. Commissioners Sierra Davis, Meracus Hernandez and Christopher Napierski were absent.

Also, present were Assistant Planner Meredith Badalucca, Consultant Robert Santy, Town Council Liaison Kevin Lathrop, and Matthew Davis, Director of Land Use and Development.

4) Alterations to the Agenda -- None

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

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

6) Minutes

a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve the Minutes of December 28, 2023 Regular Meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Lapinski, seconded by Vice-Chair St. Felix to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 28, 2023. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor. **Motion Approved.**

b. To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve the Minutes of January 29, 2024 Special (not Regular) Meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Lapinski, seconded by Vice-Chair St. Felix to approve the Special (not Regular) Meeting Minutes of January 29, 2024. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor. **Motion Approved.**

c. To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve the Minutes of February 21, 2024 Special (not Regular) Meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Lapinski, seconded by Vice-Chair St. Felix to approve the Special (not Regular) Meeting Minutes of February 21, 2024. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor. **Motion Approved.**

7) Unfinished Business

a) Review of Business Report.

New Town businesses as of February 2024 reported on the New Business Report include a home-based baked goods and freeze dried candy business and a home-based doll clothes business. Also reported were a brick-and-mortar bakery and a self-service dog washing station.

b) Discussion of Business Excellence Award policies and presentations.

Per a question by Director Davis, Chairperson Gillette explained the criteria for the Business Excellence Award—a business that has been in business for a while, has a good overall appearance, and donates to the Town and/or supports the community. The award is presented quarterly. The Chairperson also remarked about the Business Spotlight that recognizes Town businesses on the Town website. There is an existing list of past award winners as questioned by Vice-Chair Felix as well as a list of potential award candidates.

c) Discussion of Business Spotlight.

Director Davis reported on an email he sent requesting time to become acclimated with his Department and to try to integrate himself with the activities of the various Town Boards, if acceptable with the Commission. He added that recommendations would be welcome. Chairperson Gillette agreed to the request. Director Davis noted he had only been in his position for two (2) weeks but by the next Commission he hoped to have more concrete recommendations—relevant and meaningful ones to make a contribution to the Town.

8) New Business

a) Staff projects updates.

Assistant Planner Badalucca reported on current Town development projects that include the following: (1) a multi-family at 303 Route 32; (2) an application for 26 Platoz Drive that was withdrawn; and (3) an application for a second single-family lot at 581 Route 163. Per a question by Commissioner Hewitt, the Platoz Drive application was withdrawn as it could not meet the Town planning requirements and would therefore follow up with an engineer on the same. Vice-Chair Felix inquired about the status of the former drive-in; the Assistant Planner reported that the property was still being cleared, microphone stands are being removed, pavement is being crushed, and an office for the construction site will be housed in the former concession stand.

b) Discussion concerning Cannabis Dispensary Facilities, Hybrid retailers and Retailers as requested by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Assistant Planner Badalucca reported on having discussed this item in detail at last month's Commission meeting as to whether these businesses should or should not be allowed in a Town commercial zone. Per a question by Commissioner Hewitt, the Assistant Planner explained that a hybrid is a cannabis business owner that can grow and sell to medical consumers and recreational users. As she did at the last meeting, Commissioner Lapinski remarked that the cannabis business in Town last year funneled \$240,000 to the Town school system. Those funds are now limited due to a facility in Norwich and charged the Town with moving forward before New London and Waterford enter the market. She again suggested Affinity as it is a money business that people from other Towns can use. Commissioner Lapinski also explained that each child in the school system costs \$20,000 or more if the child has an IEP.

Commissioner Hewitt inquired how the business would meet the needs; Commissioner Lapinski noted location is critical to bring more business into the Town thus retaining funds for the schools. Vice-Chair Felix noted competition is helpful for consumers and puts flexibility on pricing; Commissioner Lapinski reported Affinity is a huge, rapid and booming movement that brings jobs to communities but only if land could be found per Town Councilor Lathrop. Assistant Planner Badalucca remarked the Town was currently trying to rewrite the regulations. Director Davis noted the moratorium runs out quick and Planning & Zoning must work quickly as it expires the end of May. A month is needed to get the paperwork done and a willingness for the Commission for competitive and pricing reasons to support the initiative to allow more business integrating the idea for businesses on the east and west sides of Town that to some degree are self-regulated. He reported on two (2) businesses that were permitted in Enfield but one (1) wanted to cut back by two-thirds. He also added that just as regulations are formed it does not mean that business will come and spoke of a geographic formula to create a radius distance, such as Route 85. Commissioner Hewitt remarked that cannabis businesses should not determine where they want to locate; instead, the Town can make the suggestion but it can be counter to development if it restricts. **No vote was taken for the motion on the floor.**

9) Report from Town Council Liaison

Town Councilor Lathrop reported on the clearing of the drive-in location and the clearing of Routes 163 and 32 for upcoming apartments. The majority of Town Council discussion about the Animal Control facility. Vice-Chair Felix questioned if funds could be sought for the dog pound; Assistant Planner Badalucca remarked there are specifications as to how funds are used.

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

Chairman Gillette asked three (3) times for remarks. Mayor Bunnell remarked he intended to visit Abriola Hair Salon across from Citizens Bank on Route 32 at the Mini Mall. He suggested it would be a good idea for the EDC to stop by the business—a food for thought.

11) Remarks from the Commissioners and Town Council Liaison.

Vice-Chair Felix questioned a Pink Row development that is looking for a tax abatement according to *The Day*. Assistant Planner Badalucca remarked that the matter was a while ago and that she and Director Davis would be visiting the site on Wednesday stating that some exterior mechanisms were stalled per DEEP and other permits. She reported that the interior of the project is moving along and she will try to bring her I-Pad to take pictures. Town Councilor Lathrop reported the project was presented to him on the Town Council and seeing progress was good.

12) Adjournment

Motion by Vice-Chair Felix; seconded by Commissioner Lapinski to adjourn the meeting at 6:47 p.m. Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor. **Meeting Adjourned.**