

Town of Montville Town Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Montville Town Hall – Town Council Chambers

1. Call to Order
Chairman May called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in honor of our military.
3. Roll Call
Present were Councilors Caron, Lathrop, May, Sabilia, and Southard. Absent were Councilors Jaskiewicz and Yuchniuk. Also present was Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr.
4. Special Recognitions/Presentations
 - a. Tyl Middle School Student Jayce Adams for his life saving efforts on a fellow student
Mayor Bunnell congratulated and honored Tyl Middle School Student and Troop 67 Boy Scout Jayce Adams whose swift actions performing the Heimlich Maneuver saved the life of a fellow classmate. His act reflects not only his leadership qualities, courage, and bravery, but also serves as an inspiration to all. Mayor Bunnell also commended SRO (School Resource Officer) Kirsten Todd who quickly assisted Scout Adams. Each of the Councilors congratulated Scout Adams for his successful efforts.
5. Alterations to the Agenda – *none*
6. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve:
 - a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of March 11, 2024
Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: None.
Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.
7. Executive Session
 - a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the Youth Advisory Board, Farmers Market Committee, and Southern Connecticut Regional Resources Recovery Authority (SCRRA).
Discussions to include members of the Town Council and Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr.
Motion made by Councilor Sabilia, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion:
Interviewed were Candidates Brenda Dean, Farmers Market Committee; Micah Messer, Youth Advisory Board, and; Ronald McDaniel, SCRRA. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.
Invited parties exited Town Council Chambers for Executive Session at 7:04 p.m.
Chairman May resumed the meeting at 7:28 p.m. No votes were taken during Executive Session.
8. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit
Rebecca Maurice, 1567 Route 85, Oakdale, stated that they have been busy mobilizing and educating the community on the plight of the Animal Shelter. Their efforts have gained overwhelming public support as many of the residents have expressed their doubts that the project will move forward. She expressed her undying commitment to fight for a new Animal Shelter and recognized the residents in attendance who will also continue to fight for a new Shelter. She requested that the Town Council hold a Special Meeting to discuss the Shelter and show the community that plans are in place for its funding, reinforce its belief to do better for our animals and provide a sign of good faith.

Ann Gaulin, 64 Damato Drive, Oakdale, stated that the citizens have been waiting for many years for a decision to be made regarding the Town's Animal Shelter. While responses to their many questions have been received, she expressed her concerns that the funding that has been allocated to the project has not been obligated and could be reallocated. She urged

the Town Council to establish an alternative plan(s) and set a date for a Town Meeting so that they could break ground this summer. She did not believe a referendum was necessary. She offered a photograph of the Animal Shelter with a list of the violations for any interested individuals.

Ann Antley, 10 Hunters Run, Oakdale, reiterated the previous comments, stating their commitment to the Animal Shelter, including phone calls that are being made to the State Legislators. She stated the importance of having a Shelter that will protect their animals. She is hopeful that that action will soon be taken.

State Representative Holly Cheeseman, 16 Mitchell Drive, Niantic, stated that she has heard the citizen's pleas and spoken with the Town's Mayor. As a Ranking Member of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee, she has had several meetings with the Governor and OPM (Office of Policy Management) regarding the importance of funding the Animal Shelter. Given the opportunity to partner with its neighboring towns, this project is a perfect fit for funding. She thanked the residents, the Mayor, the Town Council, and previous Town Councils for their efforts and stated her commitment to the cause. Her goal is to obtain funding for the Animal Shelter before the end of the current fiscal year.

Patrice Flatley, 68 Chapel Hill Road, Oakdale, while, admittedly, ignorant of all of the political and/or budgetary constraints related to the construction of the Animal Shelter, does understand the topic of animal cruelty and abuse. She shudders to think if her pet escaped and was brought to the shelter in its current condition and urged them to think about their beloved pet in the same manner.

9. Communications

- a. Copy of the March 2024 Financial Reports from Finance Director Barbara Griffin
- b. Copy of the legal bills from Suisman-Shapiro for the month of February 2024
- c. Copy of the legal bills from Halloran & Sage for the month of February 2024
- d. Copy of a letter from Mayor Bunnell in response to Resident Alfred J. Mandler's letter, dated March 7, 2024, regarding a possible violation of the Town Charter

10. Report from the Town Attorney on Matters Referred – *none*

11. Remarks from the Mayor and/or Administrative Department Heads to include Matters Referred

Mayor Bunnell reported that the Cook Tower Groundbreaking event was held. He complimented the WPCA (Water Pollution Control Authority) Superintendent and Administrator for their efforts. He continues to attend as many town board and commission meetings as possible and staff meetings, which are positively progressing. He also attended a Tri-Town Gardner Lake Meeting to discuss the plans for the upcoming summer seasons to deal with the Lake's ongoing issues. The Police Department plans to be actively engaged in the efforts in conjunction with the Towns of Bozrah and Salem. He has begun reviewing the FY2025/26 Budget. He also toured the Rand-Whitney Containerboard and reviewed their past expansions, renovations, and efforts to quell the noise emitted from the Plant. He also attended the Annual Easter Egg Hunt, hosted by the Parks & Recreation Department and Oxoboxo Lodge, which was very well attended.

The Animal Control Facility Contract was returned to Silver Petrucelli + Associates for their continued assessment of the existing facility. He also sent a revised bonding request for House Bill 92, increasing the requested amount to \$2 million. He expressed his appreciation to Rep. Cheeseman for attending this evening's meeting and providing the residents with some hope. A rejection notice was received from the Community Investment Fund. He has requested that the Public Works Department continue to work on the existing Facility and review and address the violations. He commended Animal Control Officer Bruce Rebelo's efforts to clean the Facility and provide a humane living space for the

animals. While he agreed that the Facility is small and does not meet the State's New Guidelines, he ensured the residents that there is no animal cruelty nor inhumane treatment of the animals at the Shelter. The Town has four (4) years to meet the new guidelines. He stated that should the Town be required to fund the Facility, which may cost up to \$3 million, a Referendum in which all of the Town's residents will have the opportunity to vote on the matter would be held, and not a Town Meeting. He expressed his appreciation to his retiring Executive Assistant Connie Malchiodi, whose presence and laughter will be greatly missed. Cindy Breton, who is in the process of transitioning into the position, has been hired to take her place. He also commended and congratulated the prompt response of two (2) of the Paid Firefighter/EMTs, who responded to a Call for Service on April 4, at 2:00 a.m., and successfully helped deliver a healthy baby girl in the Chesterfield area..

Land Use and Development Director Matt Davis thanked the Mayor for the opportunity to join the team and help the community move forward. He provided a brief background of his experience and commended the Department's staff for their dedication and level of competence. He has been spending the last few weeks familiarizing himself with the inner workings of the office and the scope of work and is in the process of reassembling information to create a Project Inventory that will note the status of various projects. The Inventory will also help the Office establish its priorities and organize its roles and responsibilities. A \$250,000.00 Community Investment Fund Grant application is being drafted with the help of Goman + York Property Advisors to help fund a collaborative effort between the Planning & Zoning and Economic Development Commissions. The focus of the grant will be to implement the recommendations included in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and identify any possible opportunities for development, re-development, adaptive reuse, Zoning Regulation Changes, and the like. He also addressed the Animal Control Facility, stating that the services of Silver Petrucci + Associates to review and assess the violations are recommended. He questioned the plan to demolish the current Facility and rebuild a new Facility at a different location on the property which, he felt, would be more costly than gutting and adding to the existing Facility. While understanding the contentious nature of the item, he stated the importance of investigating all of their options.

Fishing Pier and Boat Launch Status (Chairman May) – A Pre-Application Meeting with CT DEEP (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) will be held next week and CLA Engineers, Inc., will be drafting the bid documents.

Mayor Bunnell added that Land Use & Development Director Davis' efforts will help provide some relief for the town's taxpayers.

Public Works Director John Carlson spoke concerning the items on this evening's Agenda. He reported that no bids were received following the adjustments that were made to the Large Pavilion project to help decrease the funding needed for its renovation. After a series of telephone calls, he received one bid, which, he felt, was reasonable. The project includes the repair/replacement of the 26 (twenty-six) columns and stage roofing. This evening's Agenda also includes an increase in Commercial Brush Hauling to \$30.00 to help offset the Transfer Station costs and an increase in Driveway Permits to help offset the cost of the time it takes to review each of the driveways.

12. Reports from Standing Committees

- a. Town Administration/Rules of Procedure – *no meeting; no report*
- b. Finance

Chairman May reported that several Finance Meetings to discuss the Proposed FY2024/25 Budget were held. The final meeting will be held tomorrow evening and the information will be forwarded to the Mayor.

c. Public Works/Solid Waste Disposal

In addition to the items reported by Public Works Director Carlson, Councilor Caron reported that the Committee discussed rubbish removal, tree cutting, and Town Building repairs. Transfer Station Employee Flo Turner proposed an idea for the bulk recycling of plastic bags, which was forwarded to the Mayor for implementation. A list of roads in need of paving and/or drainage work is being drafted for a possible Bond.

13. Reports from Special Committees and Liaison Councilors

a. Councilor Caron: Commission on Aging, Non-Profit Organizations, Social Services, Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Fund

Social and Senior Services will be partnering with UCFS (United Community & Family Services) to provide a Nurse once a week and a Mental Health Professional will be available to assist individuals ages 18 and over. They are also working with UCFS for Food Bank Assistance. The Center has served over 3,700 meals. The new Social Services Building is near completion and the refrigerator and freezer have been repaired and are in working condition. The Dollar Lunches continues to be popular among the town's seniors. The Director continues to work on a full range of Grant applications, including one that will provide cleaning services to homebound seniors. In partnership with the Town of Norwich, a new Med-Ride Van will be purchased..

The Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Fund did not meet.

He will be meeting with the Finance Committee to discuss maintaining the same level of funding for the FY2025/26 for the Non-Profit Organizations.

b. Councilor Jaskiewicz: Board of Education (BOE), Planning & Zoning Commission
Board of Education – In lieu of Councilor Jaskiewicz, Councilor Southard reported that the BOE recognized several Montville Marvels, including the teacher who organized a Family SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) Night, Student Hall Monitors, and several members of the community for helping pay off student lunch debts. Tyl Middle School Graduation will be held on June 13; Palmer Academy on June 14, and; Montville High School on June 17. The Superintendent provided a detailed presentation regarding High School class sizes and scheduling in relation to the budget in response to several questions received by the public. The Board engaged in an extensive discussion regarding the budget, which proposes a 4.537% increase. The budget will be presented on April 24 at Montville High School.

Superintendent Interviews (Chairman May) – A Search Committee for the hiring of a new Superintendent is being formed.

Planning & Zoning Commission – Land Use & Development Director Davis reported that the Commission will be holding a Public Hearing on Cannabis Regulations on April 23. A Subdivision Application, which was previously approved by the Inland Wetlands Commission, for a property located on Black Ash Road will be received on April 23.

c. Councilor Lathrop: Economic Development Commission, Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA)

WPCA – *conflicting meeting; no report*

Economic Development Commission – The Commission is reviewing its roles and responsibilities and working with the Planning & Zoning Commission to become a more active force in the community.

d. Councilor Sabilia: Conservation Commission, Public Safety Commission, Youth Services Bureau and Advisory Board

The Conservation Commission is continuing its work at the Community Center and will be mulching the garden in the parking lot. They are also in the process of treating

some of the beech trees that are inflicted with beech blight. Issues related to individuals riding their dirt bikes and quads ruining the walking trails on the property continue; any persons witnessing violators are encouraged to contact the Police Department. He encouraged the Town's non-profit organizations to sign up for the Roadside Cleanup Program, which is funded through the Town's Nip Funds. Participating organizations can receive up to \$500.00 for cleaning a town road.

The Youth Services Department held a Blood Drive today at the Community Center. Appreciation was expressed to Oakdale Fire Company Chief Micah Messer and the Oakdale Fire Company for their donation of an AED (automated External Defibrillator) for the building. An informative Zoom presentation regarding the legalization of marijuana with Author Ben Cort was held. In addition, a touching presentation was provided by former NBA Star Chris Herren who spoke about his experiences with addiction and journey to recovery. Registration for the Summer Program will be held on May 13. A donation for new equipment for two (2) student-athletes was received from the Ryan Marshall Foundation. The proceeds from this year's Penny Drive will benefit the Community Beautification Project to paint the water tower. Appreciation was expressed to Dave Waddington for his help in organizing the project.

Public Safety Commission – Montville Police Department Lt. David Radford applied for and received a \$24,000.00 Distracted Driving/High Visibility Grant. The Fire Companies welcomed Full-time Career Firefighters Josh Brogaw and Noah Dembrowski. The Commission has submitted its proposed FY2024/25 Budget request, which includes funding for one (1) additional firefighter.

- e. Councilor Southard: Farmers Market Committee, Library Committee, Parks & Recreation Commission

Library Committee – *no meeting; no report*

Farmers Market Committee – This year's Farmers Market will open on Tuesday, June 18. The weekly events will continue to be held on Tuesday evenings, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., at the Pavilion. The Committee continues to work on recruiting and scheduling vendors and food trucks to populate the events.

Parks & Recreation Commission – The Commission's discussion included the repairs to the large Pavilion. Summer Camp preparations have begun and the Director is busy conducting interviews for camp counselors. The Summer Camp tuition has been increased by \$5.00 this year. The Summer Carnival will be held on June 14, 15, and 16 and will feature a new vendor for the rides.

14. Appointments and Resignations

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to re-appoint Isaac Michael Tait to the Planning & Zoning Commission with a term to expire on May 9, 2028.

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 5-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Motion carried.

15. Unfinished Business

- a. To Consider and Act on a motion to discuss the progress of the Animal Control Facility. (Councilor Yuchniuk)

See Item 11 above.

16. New Business

- a. **Resolution #2024-19. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to refund taxes due to overpayments and corrections in the amount of \$3,845.63 (three

thousand eight hundred forty-five dollars and sixty-three cents) as requested by the Tax Collector. (Councilor May)

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 5-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.

- b. **Resolution #2024-20. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to increase the Driveway Permit Fee to \$50.00, as recommended by the Public Works/Solid Waste Standing Committee. (Councilor Caron)

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 5-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.

- c. **Resolution #2024-21. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to waive the sealed bid requirement in Section 708(a) of the Town Charter for the Repairs to the Large Pavilion and associate Town Fees as it is in the best interest of the Town. (Councilor Caron)

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: The Contractor for the project is East Construction, LLC. Roll Call vote, 4-0-1. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Sabilia, Southard, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Voting in Abstention: Councilor Lathrop. Resolution passed.

- d. **Resolution #2024-22. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to amend the Solid Waste Collection and Disposal Regulations, as recommended by the Public Works/Solid Waste Standing Committee. (Councilor Caron)

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 5-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.

- e. **Resolution #2024-23. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to increase the Commercial Brush Disposal Fee to \$30.00 per truckload, as recommended by the Public Works/Solid Waste Standing Committee. (Councilor Caron)

Motion made by Councilor Southard, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 5-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.

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

Carol Howard, 23 Bayberry Lane, Uncasville, while recognizing the progress, felt that more needs to be done for the Animal Shelter. Should a Referendum be held, she urged the public to promote the event as she was very disappointed that only 3,000 of the 12,000 total voters voted for the millions of dollars of funding for the BOE's HVAC System.

Adam Elkins, 31 Bridge Street, Uncasville, who resides near and has visited the Shelter, commented on the noise, odor, cold winter temperatures, and the building's cracked and crumbling state. He asked that the Town Council take the issue seriously and make a positive change for the community. He believed that the longer they wait, the more expensive the construction of a new Facility will be.

Rebecca Maurice, 1567 Route 85, Oakdale, expressed her confusion and frustrations, stating that it was previously decided that no additional funds would be invested in the existing Shelter and this evening, discussions have included its possible renovation. She questioned where the funding for the assessment of the building would derive from, who makes those decisions, and whether the Town staff could inspect and evaluate the building. The Shelter, she added, has failed its inspections over the past eight (8) years and funds should not be expended for a Shelter that cannot be renovated, as determined by a previous Committee.

18. Remarks from the Councilors and the Mayor

Councilor Southard ensured the residents that each of the Councilors was taking the matter of the Animal Shelter very seriously. She continues to learn about the many aspects of the project. She stated that they have a fiscal responsibility to the whole Town and agreed that a Referendum would be the best way to provide all of the residents with an opportunity to have their voices heard. She continues to be hopeful that the Town will receive the Bond; a list of the State Bond Commission Members has been provided to Ms. Maurice to distribute to the residents.

Councilor Sabilia agreed that the Shelter is “terrible”, adding that no work orders have been issued for the last four (4) years. He felt that it is important to assess the building and repair some of the items while the new building is being constructed. He encouraged everyone to stop by *Nino’s Pizzeria* and mention MYFL (Montville Youth Football League) and receive 10% off their order. He thanked Rep. Cheeseman for attending this evening’s meeting and for her efforts. He also thanked the Animal Control Facility Team and encouraged them to continue their efforts. He was confident that the issue would be resolved. Go Huskies!

Councilor Lathrop concurred with his colleagues and expressed their appreciation for the residents’ efforts and consistency. He assured them that they were working towards a resolution.

Chairman May stated that the construction of an Animal Control Facility will take time, noting that the New London Facility was completed in one-and-one-half years. Efforts are being made to improve the conditions of the current Facility, including the installation of a hot water heater and two (2) mini-split units and cleaning the Facility. An alternative option is to utilize a Shelter in a neighboring town, which he is not in favor of. He assured the public that they were moving forward and asked that they respect their efforts. He also corrected his comment during last month’s meeting that he had spoken with the Parks & Recreation Commission Liaison Councilor Southard, not Parks & Recreation Commission Chairman.

Mayor Bunnell, again, congratulated Scout Adams and SRO Todd for their lifesaving efforts and Firefighter/EMTs Alex Blais and Kevin Rowe for safely delivering a baby. He concurred with the Councilors, stating that they are taking the issue of the Animal Control Facility seriously and are hoping that the funding for the project will be successful. Should the funding fall through, he encouraged the residents to help promote the need for a new Facility as did those who pushed for the construction of the Public Safety Building. He added that no official assessment of the current building was conducted and no cost estimates have been provided to renovate the Shelter. The Shelter, in its current condition, will not meet the required specifications in 2029.

19. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard, to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, 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