

**TOWN OF MONTVILLE**  
**Parks & Recreation Commission**  
**Special Meeting – June 26, 2024 -- 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 Stone called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance.**

All stood and pledged the flag.

**3. Roll Call.**

Present were Chairperson Rocky Stone and Commissioners William Barlow, Jon Chase, Morgan Matthewson and John Plikus. Vice-Chair Matt Beaupre and Commissioners Noah Carver, Mary Hillman and Deborah Schober were absent. A quorum was present.

Director Peter Bushway, Town Council Liaison Kate Southard and Mayor Lenny Bunnell were also present.

**4. Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (3-minute limit).**

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

**5. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve:**

a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of May 15, 2024.

**Motion** by Commissioner Matthewson; seconded by Commissioner Plikus to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of May 15, 2024. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

**6. Recreation Director's Report June 2024.**

Recreation Director Bushway summarized items from his June 2024 report as follows:

- The fiscal year ending June 30 is near and the Director has spoken with the Finance Director who will make transfers for all Town Departments with line item deficits. The Recreation Department will have two (2) or three (3) transfers.
- There is one (1) design currently for the Desjardins Park playground and two (2) others are pending receipt. The designs will be submitted to the Commission for their review and approval. The work to complete the playground will be done by the design company, not Public Works.

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- The Farmers Market opened for the season on June 18 with a number of people present and vendors on hand. Eventually, there will be vendors selling fresh produce.
- Summer Camp began on June 24 and there is a waiting list of children. Although there is a max of 230 children not all of them attend; wait list children are siphoned into the program. Payment for summer camp was a question by Chairperson Stone; Director Bushway reported payment is made for the weeks children are signed up for in advance. The Camp runs for seven (7) weeks and some children come for two (2) weeks others for four (4) weeks. Never has the attendance reached 230. Per a question by Commissioner Barlow, it was reported that those on the wait list pay in advance for camp and if they do not attend their payment is refunded. Two-thirds of the Summer Camp trips are full; the two (2) that are not full are two (2) events at the Mohegan Sun.
- The Carnival raised \$17,533 and the income/expense report will be forwarded to the Commission in July once all bills are submitted and paid. Commissioner Matthewson spoke with the carnival company and it will be checking its schedule for next year's carnival dates.

Per a question by Chairperson Stone, Director Bushway reported that the bids for the basketball courts at Camp Oakdale and Desjardins Parks will be done utilizing the estimate and specs from Norwich. The Finance Department will send out the bids for the projects.

**7. Report from Finance**

Director Bushway reported the part-time recreation program needed supplies for Summer Camp and there is a rentals deficit for Camp Oakdale. Chairperson Stone questioned whether \$9,000 was enough to cover expenses until the end of the week, the fiscal year end. The Director reported in July 2023 that the account would be overspent as \$20,000 was removed by the Town Council and it was also the first year that the account was not in the black. The Finance Director will do the line item transfers in July before the auditors arrive in August. Per the facility usage page, the Large Pavilion is being booked and it is good to see people using it as it is a popular venue this time of year according to Commissioner Chase who was glad to see the investment in the location.

**8. June Newsletter.**

Director Bushway reported that the June Newsletter has a blank spot on the front of it for the Movie Night scheduled for middle or late August. Commissioner Matthewson asked whether recommendations for movies are being requested. Town Councilor Southard inquired if food or a concessions stand would be available for the Movie Night; Director Bushway will use the popcorn machine from Youth Services and water will also be available.

**9. Unfinished Business.**

a. Discussion of Approved Budget

Chairperson Stone reported that there is no formal notification on the status of the upcoming budget nor the amount of funding approved or not approved for the Department operating budget and CIP. He asked that Director Bushway provide feedback to the Commission at next month's meeting so it can understand the budget and the CIP going forward for the new fiscal year. The Chairman tabled the item until next month.

b. Discussion of projects and funding status

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Chairperson Stone remarked on the spreadsheet that he developed to provide information on the status of Department projects and funds allocated that was included in the meeting packet. He mentioned that it might be likely that covid funds will need to be spent or pulled back. The next update of the spreadsheet will include figures for the new fiscal year CIP and recommendations regarding the walkarounds. The Chairperson noted that the Public Works Director Carlson was given a list of facilities' maintenance items that he worked on as he could.

c. Food Truck Rules

Chairperson Stone remarked that the food truck rules were submitted a few months ago to the Commission for review. Since there has been no feedback from the Commission thus Director Bushway is therefore free to move forward with them. Per the Director, the rules will be submitted to TARP and possibly the Town Attorney before putting them into practice. During winter, the Community Center wants to have foods truck there on Saturdays to take advantage of the activity that occurs there on weekends. Director Bushway remarked that it was not a bad idea as long as it does not hinder the activity that occurs there.

d. Farmers Market

Commissioner Matthewson reported that the first two (2) weeks of the Farmers Market season have gone well with a lot of people attending on the opening date and vendors seemed happy. She asked if there is a way to count the number of people who attend. Town Councilor Southard remarked that it was tried last year and the only two (2) people who could do it was Flo and Kate. Volunteers are available for this year. The Town Councilor spoke about the energy of the dancers present who "danced their hearts out" in that heat. Commissioner Matthewson noted that some who parked in designated handicap parking spaces did not have handicap stickers; Town Councilor Southard remarked the problem will be handled. Commissioner Chase commented on the success of the event.

e. Carnival Committee Update

Commissioner Matthewson reported that the Carnival went well but Friday had light attendance with the impending rain. Saturday there was a continuous line of attendees and there were several compliments about the fireworks display. Next year the goal is to make the Carnival bigger and better, per the Commissioner, and her goal is to overtake more fields. Chairperson Stone commented on the new carnival vendor who ended the event by doing half of the work. The vendor was organized, had a head start on issues, and was very accessible and had thoughts on everything. The Director also noted that the rides were great and said the aim is to book the date now for the 2025 Carnival. A request for more rides, adult and children's rides, was suggested. Commissioner Matthewson also reported that there was fried dough, candied apples and lemonade available. Town Councilor Southard noted that the new vendor commented on his having front-loaded the rides and should have spread them out. She also commented that it was nice to work with someone so professional.

f. Facility Walk Arounds Presentations

Chairperson Stone reported that neither he nor Commissioner Matthewson have completed their tours of the Camp Oakdale complex. He also noted that Commissioner Carver had not done his assignment either. The plan is to have them completed before the next Commission meeting.

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Commissioner Chase reported that he reviewed the Mostowy Property in two (2) phases. He noted that the roads have been mowed by Public Works as there were complaints about them and remarked that as we move forward protocol to be determined on the same due to climatic changes and upkeep. The Commissioner relayed that the property is 30 acres just north of Camp Oakdale having been acquired by the Town Council several years ago and more recently dedicated by the current Town Council as open space for passive activity. Acknowledging the busy schedules of the Commission, Commissioner Chase also noted the open invitation by his friend Rob Valenti to visit at any time Dragonfly Farm in Mystic, the largest frisbee and golf park, that looks like a farm and has open space. He also mentioned Salem Frisbee Park that has fairways between trees that may require frequent maintenance. Further, the Commissioner noted the improved access to the Mostowy Property by creating a wall close to the athletic field parking lot, a quick and convenient path to Raymond Hill at the top and around to the back of the property. On his tour, the Commissioner encountered beer cans and ruts in the mud apparently from persons accessing the property from Route 163. He remarked that a gate would limit access from that location to the property and also suggested removal of the collapsed barn structure adjacent to the Route 163 entrance. Chairperson Stone and Commissioner Chase opined that the barn structure could not be saved per discussion with Public Works Director Carlson. It was recognized that possibilities for the Property are available, i.e., incorporating signs that mark the trails. Lastly, the Department has dual management of the Property with the Conversation Commission and a reestablished circle trail will be up and running and frisbee golf must be made to happen.

10. **New Business.**

- a. To Consider an Act on a Motion to accept the recommendation of the Montville Community Center Building Exploratory Committee to build a new Community Center without a Natatorium at the Fair Oaks location. Details of the recommendation are contained in the document “Community Center Exploratory Building Committee Report.”

**Motion** by Commissioner Matthewson; seconded by Commissioner Barlow to accept the recommendation of the Montville Community Center Building Exploratory Committee to build a new Community Center without a Natatorium at the Fair Oaks location. Details of the recommendation are contained in the document “Community Center Exploratory Building Committee Report.” Discussion: Chairperson Stone remarked on a report regarding data studied in 2002 concerning the Community Center and thanked Commissioner Chase for locating the information that was not easily accessible. Options for the property were narrowed to three (3) and Town Councilor Southard was asked to post them as it was good for the public to see. Initially, needs for the Center were discussed such as more locker rooms. Option 1 would include a new gymnasium attached to the existing Fair Oaks and the ability to have more space for Youth Services and square footage for it. The cost for this option is deemed as \$10,345,860. Option 2 chosen by the Committee requires the demolition of the existing Center and replacement of it to include a new gymnasium. Expanded space would address the needs of the Department and Youth Services and will fit into the square footage needed at a cost of \$18,167,700. Option 3 would include a pool and uncertainty as to whether space needs will be accommodated at the existing site. Additionally, the annual operating costs for a pool would require hiring staff and maintenance at \$1,000,000. The cost for this option is \$24,294,900. Comments from the Commission were requested. Commissioner Barlow noted that all aspects of the project were addressed and the

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decision is for the Town Council to make. Commissioner Chase remarked he never would support a pool as it is doomed to failure as the operating costs are unsustainable for the Town. His choice was Option 1 but said he would trust and support the Committee’s proposal. Chairperson Stone remarked that the Committee Report gives the Town Council and the Mayor enough information to move forward with a decision. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Barlow, Chase, Matthewson, Plikus, and Stone. *Opposed:* none. 5-0-0. **Motion approved.**

- b. To Consider and Act on a Motion to present the recommendation of the Montville community Center Building Exploratory Committee to build a new Community Center without a Natatorium at the Fair Oaks Location to the Town Council. Details of this recommendation are contained in the document “Community Center Exploratory Building Committee Report.”

**Motion** by Commissioner Matthewson; seconded by Commissioner Barlow to present the recommendation of the Montville community Center Building Exploratory Committee to build a new Community Center without a Natatorium at the Fair Oaks Location to the Town Council. Details of this recommendation are contained in the document “Community Center Exploratory Building Committee Report.” Discussion: Chairperson Stone remarked that he was comfortable with the option approved by the Committee and stated that the Committee Report outlines all three (3) options. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Barlow, Chase, Matthewson, Plikus, and Stone. *Opposed:* none. 5-0-0. **Motion approved.**

- c. To Consider and Act on a Motion to disband the Montville Community Center Building Exploratory Committee.

**Motion** by Commissioner Matthewson; seconded by Commissioner Plikus to disband the Montville Community Center Building Exploratory Committee. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Barlow, Chase, Matthewson, Plikus, and Stone. *Opposed:* none. 5-0-0. **Motion approved.**

11. **Communications** -- None

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

Chairperson Stone asked three (3) times for remarks. Mayor Bunnell remarked about Boy Scout Tyler Lawton who about a 1 ½ years ago wanted to build a walking trail behind the Montville Public Safety Building as an Eagle Scout project. The Mayor acknowledged helping Tyler at the time to achieve his goal and admitted that his assumption about the location of the Town line was incorrect. It was later found that the Town line was not there but the attempt he said was the right thing to do. A year ago, an attempt was also made to alleviate car accidents including fatalities on Route 163 at Oxoboxo Road due to an ongoing line of sight issue and it was noted there has been some movement about the concern for the portion of the area that is State owned. In February 2023, Solid Waste had discussion about removing the embankment to improve the line of sight and installing a fence thereafter, but no contact was made with Parks & Recreation to get the Commission involved in the process although they had authority. Public Works then cut down trees to clear the area. On April 10, 2023, the Town Council agreed the fence should be done once the line of sight work was completed. In June 2023, discussion was had again with Public Works but the project was put on hold pending the removal of the hill to improve the line of sight. Yet

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again, no discussion was had with Parks & Recreation and the project moved forward at a slow pace. At the January 2024 Public Works meeting, discussed was the installation of part of the fence that would be extended once the hill was removed. Parks & Recreation was not consulted on the matter discussed with the Commission and the assumption was made that it was not necessary as the State owned part of the property. Also, it did not matter as the intention was to improve the line of sight. The Commission should have been consulted somewhere along the line. Mayor Bunnell noted that he was part of the Town Council at the time and nothing was done to make sure all steps were covered, and they were not. Further, now as Mayor the project is being considered and it was assumed it was only going to cost \$40,000. The project, however, is now at \$160,000 with the use of TAR funds. Mayor Bunnell was told by the Finance Director that part of the project had moved forward and put out to bid. The highest bid was \$212,000; but the project will move forward with the lowest bid. He stated the hill should have been removed and a project was established that did not go anywhere for a while. The Mayor remarked that the intent of Public Works was to improve the line of sight at Route 163 Oxoboxo Road. Once it is done, Mayor Bunnell wants to make sure all protocol is followed.

Commissioner Plikus inquired if the project was near the screwy intersection and whether any thought was given to moving the road down and squaring it with the intersection connecting the Pavilion with that parcel of land. The Mayor remarked that the thought arose over a year ago and was mentioned again tonight at the Public Works meeting. By removing the hill, there would be a 4-way intersection and Camp Oakdale would gain property and a better appearance. Mayor Bunnell believes the project could still be done had it been brought to the Parks & Recreation Commission initially with the potential for additional parking, maybe. Commissioner Chase remarked that sight line is important but disagreed with the improvements that would disturb the scenic view and destruction of mature trees offsetting the Pavilion which would be a loss. The Commissioner noted that the Commission could not formally approve the plan given tonight it is having a special meeting but it could informally be understood with thanks to Mayor Bunnell if he would be willing to help with making landscape improvements, a plan of phased concept, that would be a net win for everyone. Commissioner Chase also noted that conversation was had with the former Public Works official concerning improvements and masking the bathrooms located near the road. Chairperson Stone remarked that the Commission could request information on the improvements suggested by Commissioner Chase also noted history with the former Public Works official. It was also suggested to take a look at the park in Colchester that has a nice pavilion, ball field, trees and shade. Commissioner Chase noted funds were found in the Public Works budget for a landscape improvement, handicap parking, shade and trees but progress was never made nor did it come to fruition. The question was posed as to where funds would be found and who would follow through with the project. A question was also posed as to whether Mayor Bunnell would be willing to help. Mayor Bunnell remarked he would like to see the area made better and was willing to help with it 100%. He also noted that the location is the geographical center of Town and spoke of having it be the Town Park with monuments—a dream he had for Camp Oakdale. Commissioner Chase reported that there was a Town green study done some years ago regarding the Camp Oakdale area. The Mayor remarked that between the Commission and his office plans could be made for improvements. He noted that fundraising is being done to repair the tank to make it something the Town could be proud of therefore the same thing could be done for Camp Oakdale. Chairperson Stone thanked Mayor Bunnell for the information he provided

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and remarked that any further discussion could be done by adding the topic to the next meeting agenda.

**13. Remarks from Town Council Liaison Southard.**

Town Councilor Southard remarked that she was charged by the Commission to make contact with the Beautification & Garden Committee concerning spaces that need sprucing up. That Committee is willing to help but the Commission would have to fund the projects. The Town Councilor suggested inviting the Public Works Director to the meeting. Lastly, Town Councilor Southard reported on having attended the dance recital with Chairperson Stone on Friday night. She also mentioned having seen information regarding Trick or Trunk; Director Bushway noted the date as October 26.

**14. Remarks from Parks & Recreation Director Bushway.**

Director Bushway remarked that if any part of the Route 163 Oxoboxo Road project is State owned possible funds could be available.

**15. Remarks from Commissioners.**

Commissioner Chase remarked on the need to make contact with someone in Town who has landscape design experience and added that he was encouraged by the Mayor's comments this evening. He looks forward to discussion for making improvements with a defined plan. Chairperson Stone suggested the possibility of forming a subcommittee with invites to Mayor Bunnell and the Public Works Director Carlson for discussion purposes. Commissioner Plikus noted the updated list of parks improvements. Commissioner Chase appreciated the Mayor for coming to the Commission meeting and expressed his concern having attended the Public Works meeting earlier today. Chairperson Stone acknowledged that he did not think the discussion by Mayor Bunnell should have been brought to the Commission although the Mayor apologized for not coming forward sooner. Instead, the Chairperson was more incensed with the Commission/Department being stripped of the oversight for Horton Cove and saw no need for it particularly given no one spoke with the Commission prior to the decision being made. Chairperson Stone also remarked that the dance recital made the children and parents happy; he then wished everyone a Happy July 4<sup>th</sup>.

**16. Adjournment.**

**Motion** by Commissioner Chase; seconded by Commissioner Plikus to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 5-0-0, all in favor. **Meeting adjourned.**

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**