

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes – July 15, 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 6:00 p.m.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

3) Roll Call

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

Also in attendance were Matthew Davis, Director of Land Use and Development, Assistant Planner Meredith Badalucca, Mayor Leonard Bunnell (6:05 p.m.). Town Council Liaison Kevin Lathrop was absent.

4) Alterations to the Agenda

Motion by Chairperson Gillette; seconded by Commissioner Davis to move up New Business Item 9.a to Item 7 and renumber remaining Agenda items accordingly. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. **Motion approved.**

5) Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion by Chairperson Gillette; seconded by Commissioner Davis to approve the EDC Regular Meeting Minutes of June 17, 2024. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. **Motion approved.**

6) Remarks from the Public (3-Minute Limit)

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

7) WPCA Presentation -- (*This item was moved up on the Agenda.*)

WPCA Superintendent Derek Albertson was introduced to the Commission and gave a presentation on the functions of the Town water and sewer components, overall production, staffing, financial status and current projects of the Montville Water Pollution Control Authority (“WPCA”). A handout was presented to the Commission and finer points were presented as follows:

- Former mayor Ron McDaniel is now on staff as the Plant Administrator. The Administrator position had been vacant since the Superintendent’s hire that had him formally filling both roles.
- The Superintendent has the honor and ability to provide clean water predicated by his passion for swimming.
- The Plant is able to extend water services in certain areas that has a current capacity of 50 connections with the capacity to expand but has not been maximized since 1991. Water is currently supplied to the Department of Corrections (“DOC”), Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority (“SCWA”) and Rand-Whitney.
- Water was supplied for two (2) fire suppression incidents at D & W Transport at a cost of \$2.5 million—water lowers the temperature of fires but does not extinguish them.
- The Town has 74 miles of sewer lines with 62 miles of gravity that moves sewage to the Plant,

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approximately 2 million gallons a day. Expansion to the Meadows would require two (2) new pump stations.

- Trading Cove Brook has pristine water and there may be grants available to keep it clean.
- The Plant is an award winning facility and in 2020 it received a utility management award out of 550 plants.
- Contracted obligations exist with the Mohegan Utility Tribal Authority (“MUTA”) and Rand-Whitney. Hydraulic capacity at the plant is permitted up to 4.5 million gallons and levels are slowly returning to pre-covid ones. The Plant is the most unique in New England with typically 98% effluent levels. Additionally, 60% of water is recycled and produces revenue for the Plant.
- Financially, the Plant is supposed to operate like a business and currently has almost \$10 million in reserves. Rates for water and sewer are one-third and one-half, respectively, of the national average. Enterprise funding that invests into the capital contribute to the reserve fund balance. Funds are made through septic receiving—Rand-Whitney pays \$200,000 per month in addition to the money for selling it water. MUTA (sewer) pays \$50,000 per month.
- As to expenses, electrical costs run \$60,000 per month. When Administrator McDaniel was mayor he worked with an energy source and got a fuel cell from which 90% of the electricity is generated on site, with no worry regarding transmission costs. The fuel cell is the best performing in Connecticut. Mayor Bunnell asked why the fuel cell is not at 100%; Superintendent Albertson noted that when first installed the generation was at 40% – 60%.
- Waste water management involves the treatment of waste water to grow microbes, but when they grow too much the waste solids must be incinerated. A plan is being run now for aerobic digestion of the waste solids.
- Systems management with alarms and computer software manage water pumping and control. A \$4 million grant was received by the Plant last year and one for \$1.2 million for refurbishing the water tower on Cook Drive that will have debt service to Groton Utilities (“GU”), the Town’s water source, that is looking to increase its water rate.
- Rand-Whitney contributes a large revenue that offsets the sewer rate. Expansion of the water and sewer lines is reviewed on a case by case basis by the Plant engineers with the cost absorbed by the Plant.
- Superintendent Albertson expressed his support of the Commission to Director Davis and Assistant Planner Badalucca.
- Kudos was given to the Plant staff as being the best as well as talented. Additionally, Administrator McDaniel is great.

Per a question by Director Davis concerning the origin of the authority of the WPCA, Superintendent Albertson remarked that the Commission is an quasi enterprise agency of five (5) commissioners with 90% of its funds committed to payroll and budget. The water and sewer system budgets, CIP and funding are each separate. The WPCA follows the purchasing authority to make spending decisions with the budget approved by the Commission. Director Davis remarked that the chats with Town entities is a means to understand the tools we have and do not have, a good incentive. Superintendent Albertson also noted that the Town of Montville is deemed a distressed community by the State therefore grant funds are available to those municipalities which the State wants to provide. He added that selling a municipality to developers would not prevail without a good Plant and water supply. Director Davis also noted that the CIP plans will be a big part of the Commission priorities and phases for land development. Discussion followed concerning the cost of sewer service to a homeowner versus expansion of a septic system that would be less costly and Oxoboxo leaching fields per comments by Chairperson Gillette.

Director Davis remarked that the State says towns must have sewer avoidance areas thus extending sewer to those areas can be complicated and unwanted. Superintendent Albertson proposed having an engineer present to the Commission about what would or would not be equitable for development. He offered an invite for the Commission to visit the Plant. Vice-Chair St. Felix questioned cost to the ratepayer. Superintendent Albertson responded that it would be revenue sources with connection initially and the cost of water. The Director also noted that different land uses have different demands i.e., home development versus a retail space that only requires a bathroom. He spoke of attracting businesses such as professional offices, mentioned the subject of Alternative Intelligence and retail businesses that are not as good now although households depend upon them. Rates for office areas is 30-35%. Director Davis continued that there is a window of time with the activity at Electric Boat concerning private water and sewer rates and the challenge of housing; specifically, how funds are rolled into the economy. He referenced a former battery facility at the old power plant at the south end of Town and transition line improvement, a big factor in this part of the State. Superintendent Albertson thanked the Commission for listening to his presentation mentioning that Administrator McDaniel is unique, Mayor Bunnell as being very pro WPCA, and the Recording Secretary for keeping the WPCA in line. He acknowledged having a great crew and remarked he would be available to support the Commission.

8) Standing Business

a) Report from the Town Council Liaison – No report

Town Councilor Lathrop was absent from the meeting.

b) EDC Commission Communications -- None

c) New Business Report

The new Business Report was submitted to the Commission in the meeting packet. There were six (6) new businesses for the month of June that included two (2) brick and mortar locations—a letter works business involving letter carving, calligraphy, and letterpress printing and the other a church. The remaining four (4) businesses were home-based for pet supplies, online consulting, woodcrafts and landscaping/power washing.

d) Project Updates

Director Davis provided updates on going projects as follows:

- Work will be done to make amendments to the zoning regulations to make them more user friendly.
- Discussion with the Planning & Zoning Commission to streamline the application process is paramount. The Planning & Zoning Commission and the Inlands/Wetlands Commission currently meet once per month with the IWC taking the lead in the application process. This time frame per the Director is a competitive disadvantage. The aim is to have staff review applications and site plans that are rudimentary but these actions will depend upon the thoughts of the P&Z. Ideally, the technical staff would review the documentation and get it in shape; thereafter P&Z would align it with supporting State regulations for approval. Director Davis spoke of the support of Mayor Bunnell and spoke of threshold issues such as land use limitations. These topics will be discussed with P&Z at its meeting on July 23. Vice-Chair St. Felix inquired about multi-family units; the Director spoke of one's affordability and the other that depends upon market rate and reputable builders.

e) Business Excellence Awards – No action

9) **Ongoing Business**

a) CIF Planning Grant Status and Endorsement

Formal application was made for the CIF Grant with a decision expected in the fall. Feedback was requested to track the progress of the application.

b) Consulting Services RFP

Director Davis asked that this item be removed from the Agenda at this time.

c) Commission Work Program

Director Davis remarked on formalizing and having informal training for lay members concerning policy and of planning grants to analyze existing conditions, strengths and weaknesses and to develop goals and objectives. The plan would identify the key pieces of property on Route 32 and later on for Route 163. The Director also stated that the CIF would preposition the Town with a planning grant and to coordinate with a private sector. Mayor Bunnell noted the support in Hartford; Director Davis recognized the support of State Representatives and a long term one with the goal to get them to make calls and support the plan. The Director also reported on having a steering committee that will provide upper level guidance regarding the project by defining the program, making schedules and reviewing draft products that would require a fair commitment of time.

d) Appointment of member and alternate to CIF Grant Advisory Committee – No action

10) **New Business**

a. WPCA Presentation – *(This item was moved up to Item 7 on the Agenda).*

11) **Remarks from the Public (3-minute limit)**

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

12) **Adjournment**

Motion by Commissioner Lapinski; seconded by Commissioner Davis to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 p.m.
Voice vote: 7-0-0, all in favor. **Meeting Adjourned.**