

Town of Montville
Town Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Montville Town Hall – Town Council Chambers

1. Call to Order
Chairperson 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, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Also present was Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr.
4. Special Recognitions/Presentations – *none*
5. Alterations to the Agenda – *none*
6. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve:
 - a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of October 16, 2024
Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion:
None. Voice vote, 7-0, Motion carried.
7. Executive Session
 - a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of interviewing a candidate for the Water & Sewer Commission. Discussions to include members of the Town Council and Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr.
Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion:
Candidate Deane Terry was interviewed to serve on the Water & Sewer Commission. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Invited parties exited Town Council Chambers for Executive Session at 7:03 p.m. Chairman May resumed the meeting at 7:14 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
Ann Gaulin, 64 Damato Drive, Oakdale, thanked the businesses who donated to the pet pantry and shelter for the town's pets-in-need, including Tractor Supply and Purina Corporate. She announced that several local businesses will be collecting food for the Pet Food and Supply Drive from December 6 through 20. In preparation for the new Animal Shelter, she is in the process of establishing a non-profit organization to help local shelters and families. Those seeking aid may visit the Social Services' Pet Pantry. She looks forward to the receipt of several applications from Contractors interested in constructing the new Animal Control Facility and hearing from the Town Council and Montville Police Lieutenant David Radford regarding their next steps following the receipt of the bids.
9. Communications
 - a. Copy of the legal bills from Suisman-Shapiro for the month of September 2024
 - b. Copy of the legal bills from Halloran & Sage for the month of September 2024
 - c. Copy of a Letter from Mohegan Fire Company Chief Matthew Suarez regarding the shortfall of qualified timely responding volunteers
10. Report from the Town Attorney on Matters Referred – *none*
11. Remarks from the Mayor and/or Administrative Department Heads to include Matters Referred
Montville Police Department Lt. David Radford reported on the status of the Department's annual grant applications, including a DRE (Drug Recognition Expert)

Grant, DUI (Driving Under the Influence) Grant, and a pre-approved Distracted Driving High Visibility Enforcement Grant. He thanked the Montville Animal Shelter Community Team for their hard work securing donations and helping the animals. During the month of October, Silver Petrucelli & Associates received the Department of Labor's Wage Rates, and the CTDECD (Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development) contacted the town regarding its possible need for excess funding and requested technical changes and minor comments, which were swiftly addressed. The bid package was approved by the CTDECD on October 29 and the Pre-Bid Meeting was held at the site on November 5 with approximately ten (10) General Contractors in attendance. Eight (8) to ten (10) RFIs (Request for Information) were submitted by the November 12 deadline and have been addressed. The Bid deadline is November 19, 2:00 p.m. No bids have been received to date, which is not unusual. He reminded the Town Council that the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds must be obligated to a specified Contractor by December 31. He requested that the Town Council continue to prioritize the project and the townspeople continue their efforts and support.

Annual State Police Report of Crime in Connecticut 2023 (Chairperson May): Because the Police Department has been established for one full fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) and the Report provides the data for the calendar year (January 1 to December 31), the numbers for only one-half of the year is reflected for the town. Information pertaining to the first half of the fiscal year will be provided.

Condition of Existing Animal Control Facility (Chairperson May) – The existing facility remains sufficient to safely and healthily house the animals during the winter season. Items in need of attention are reported to the Public Works Department and are repaired in a timely manner.

Councilor Caron commended Animal Control Officer Bruce Rebelo for an impressive job managing the Facility.

Fire Marshal Paul Barnes reported on the Fire Marshal's Office and the Office of Emergency Management, stating that September and October were the driest months in the history of Connecticut. The state is listed as experiencing a moderate drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, and Governor Ned Lamont has reported that the state is in a Stage 2 Drought, bringing awareness to the residents of an emerging drought event, which could impact water supply, agriculture, and the natural ecosystem. Accompanying the drought is an elevated level of fire risk. An Emergency Burn Ban is in effect at all State Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Management Areas and municipalities have instituted burn bans. According to the National Weather Forecasts, the region is approximately seven to ten days away from any potential rain. State Municipal Drought Liaison and WPCA Superintendent Derek Albertson is maintaining communication with the town's Fire Companies, with the exception of the Chesterfield Fire Company, which is on a well system, requesting non-potable water to be available to the residents. Deputy Fire Marshal John Meigel and the volunteer Firefighters and Career Staff conducted a Fire Prevention program at the elementary schools in October. Age-appropriate Fire Prevention Packets were distributed to all of the students. The program is expected to expand, with adequate funding. In June 2024, Deputy Fire Marshal Meigel also secured a donation of 150 smoke detectors from ServPro. The detectors are available to the residents, including installation, free of charge. At the Mayor's request, a Town Hall Fire Drill Policy was drafted and will be presented to the Town Administration/Rules & Procedures Standing Committee. In October, Deputy Fire Marshal Meigel and Home Depot provided fire extinguisher training to all of its employees.

Mayor Bunnell expressed his appreciation to the Deputy Fire Marshal for all his efforts and for hosting the various events and programs.

Public Works Director John Carlson reported that the paving projects on Driscoll Drive and part of Massapeag Road in the Lathrop Development have been completed. He expressed his pride in the outcome of Driscoll Drive, where all of the curbing was replaced. The Department has been busy cleaning out and working on the catch basins throughout the town, especially those that pose a potential safety hazard, and miscellaneous items, including painting the plow trucks, painting the Town Hall doors and railings, replacing the Building Department entrance awning, and tree trimming. The Camp Oakdale Basketball Courts Project has begun, the Desjardins Court Project will be going back out to bid, and the bid process for the Camp Oakdale Building Project will close in early December. The HVAC System for the Public Safety Building is in progress. The large brush pile at the Transfer Station was delayed due to equipment malfunction.

Chairperson May added that the Bond for Road Improvement Projects passed during the recent referendum, and funds are still remaining from the previous Bond. Public Works Director Carlson concurred, adding that their priorities include the Manor, which will require working with SCWA (Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority) to replace some of the piping, Maple Avenue, and Bridge Street.

Youth Services Coordinator Barbara Lockhart commented on Item 16(d) regarding the Youth Services Program Assistant Position Description. She requested that the Town Council's approval include a wage range, stating the difficulties and importance of recruiting and retaining good employees and its relationship with equitable and livable pay rates. The part-time employees, who do not receive paid holidays, sick time, or vacations, work very hard and are invested in the children and their future. Many of the children, she added, also require additional assistance. She welcomed the Councilors to visit the Youth Center between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to experience the activities first-hand. Furthermore, the Afterschool Program is a sliding scale or fee-based program, bringing in approximately \$26,000.00 in revenue, offsetting the costs.

Requested Wage Range (Vice Chairperson Caron) – The requested range, as approved by the Town Administration/Rules & Procedures Standing Committee, is \$18.00 (eighteen dollars) to \$20.00 (twenty dollars). New hires would start at \$18.00/hour, and the existing wage for the current employees would increase based on longevity.

Human Resources Director Maria D'Amelia encouraged the adoption of a Retention Strategy, citing the existing wage disparity between the town employees. She discussed the time and difficulties she has encountered hiring qualified candidates due to a limited talent pool, advocating for the inclusion of a wage range. She also reported that there are two prospective candidates for the vacant Youth Center positions.

Mayor Bunnell expressed his appreciation to each of the Department Heads. He reported that both the Tax Collector and Assistant Tax Collectors are open. A temporary Certified Tax Collector has been hired to work in the office while they search for a qualified candidate(s). An internal interview to fill the latter position was held and it is expected to be filled in early December. The Building Department has been busy with an increase in Building Permits while the trainee prepares for the State's Building Official Step Three Examination. The Department Staff attended OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) 10 Classes during the past week and a database project valuation for permit fees is being updated. He commended Blight Inspector Melissa Richard for successful efforts in gaining the cooperation of individuals. An initial interview for the Planning Director was held. He commended Town Treasurer Patrick Wall who is filling in for the Finance Director who is on an extended leave of absence. Interviews for the Senior Center Program Developer position, which is expected to be filled in December, were held. The Staff Meetings, which have proven fruitful, and Union Contract Negotiations are

continuing. He recently attended the Open House event for the newly renovated Social Services Building, a Pre-Construction Meeting for 303 Route 32 Development, and a lightly attended Veterans Day Ceremony. He continues to attend as many board and commission meetings as possible. He recognized the Election Officials for holding a fair, safe, and secure 2024 Presidential Election, including the Registrar of Voters, Poll Workers, and Town Clerks, for their teamwork. The turnout rate was 80.67%. He reported that the expanded Absentee Vote failed while the bonding for the Road Improvement Projects and reconstruction and replacement of the Montville High School track and turf field passed.

12. Reports from Standing Committees

a. Town Administration/Rules of Procedure – *items are included on the agenda*

b. Finance

Chairperson May commended Treasurer Wall for keeping them updated and thanked Montville School District Business Manager Kathy Lamoureux for assisting them during the Finance Director's absence.

c. Public Works/Solid Waste Disposal – *see Public Works Director Carlson's report (item 11)*

Councilor Caron reported that the Camp Oakdale Small and Large Pavilion projects were completed under budget. The Committee will be reviewing other town projects and investigating the possibility of obtaining state funding.

13. Reports from Special Committees and Liaison Councilors

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

The Senior Center's free bus trips are a great success; the Center is preparing for another trip to Newport. The Home Care Grants have also proven successful and Dollar Lunches continue to be popular. He thanked the Mohegan Tribe for their donation of 300 turkeys which will be included in Social Services' Annual Thanksgiving Baskets. To date, 3,500 to 4,000 meals have been prepared for the community. The Center is also assisting residents who are in need of Energy Assistance for the winter season.

b. Councilor Jaskiewicz: Board of Education, Planning & Zoning Commission

The Planning & Zoning Commission discussed an application for a potential project comprised of over 200 living units to be located north of St. Bernard High School. The Commission's December Meeting will include a presentation from the Applicant's Traffic Coordinator.

Chairperson May noted that an article regarding the proposed development was published in The Day newspaper. Mayor Bunnell corrected the article regarding the holding of a Public Hearing.

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

WPCA – The construction of the new Cook Water Tower is completed and is in the process of being finalized before it is filled and tested. The Lead Survey was submitted; they are well ahead of their seven-year goal. The Plant continues to run well and achieved record numbers for processing and fuel cells, helping keep costs down.

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

Public Safety Commission – Everyone involved with organizing the successful Homecoming Bonfire, Home Depot Fire Safety Day, and Trick or Trunk events was thanked. The Commissioners welcomed Mohegan Fire Company Chief Matthew Suarez and thanked outgoing Chief Corey Gaetano for his service.

Youth Services Bureau and Advisory Board – Over 800 children attended and visited Youth Services’ *The Nightmare Before Christmas!* trunk at the recent Trick or Trunk event. Popcorn, candy, pizza, and fun activities were offered at their recent *Lights on Afterschool* event, celebrating After School Programs throughout the country. Everyone is encouraged to take advantage of SERAC’s (Southeastern Regional Action Council, seracct.org) free training program, which includes mental health and suicide prevention classes. The annual Basket Raffle Fundraiser, which kicked off on Election Day, will continue until November 22. Donations were received from Uncasville Oil and Devine Hydraulics and an inquiry was received from Rand Whitney as a result of a recent mailing to Montville businesses soliciting donations for the Tower Restoration Project. Residents are also reaching out to donate as a result of their “Give our Tin Man Back a Heart” campaign. Donations may be made to the Montville Youth Service Bureau (MYSB); a separate account has been established for the funds. Addiction Counseling Services, supported by the Federal Opioid Funds, will begin through BlueSky Wellness, LLC, in January 2025. Everyone was encouraged to pick up the latest issue of the Youth Action Council’s (YAC) monthly Youth Scoop newsletter, which includes details regarding the Bureau’s *You Good, Bro?* campaign. The YAC received a \$3,000.00 CREC (Capital Region Education Council) Gambling Grant which will be used to help youth with online gambling, e.g., Draft Kings, Fantasy Sports. The Juvenile Review Board, which boasts a 94% diversion rate, currently has 17 open cases, 3 new referrals, and 3 truancy referrals.

Conservation Commission – The Town Council and Conservation Commission will be taking a site walk with the Avalonia Nature Conservancy of the 669-acre Bond Property this Sunday, November 17, at 9:00 a.m.

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

Farmers Market Committee – Everyone was encouraged to attend the upcoming Holiday Market this Saturday, November 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at Tyl Middle School. Up to 45 vendors, including farmers, bakers, artisans, and crafters, as well as Santa, Mrs. Claus, and The Grinch will be present.

Library Committee – The Committee’s Annual Board Meeting was held during which they approved their Bylaws and the position description for the Librarian. The roof replacement project is completed.

Parks & Recreation Commission – The Desjardins Playground has been installed. With the completion of the Camp Oakdale Large Pavilion Project, the Commission is seeking to make improvements to beautify the area. The Commission received a proposal to install semi-permanent disc golf baskets behind the pickleball courts. The Commission has been discussing the possibility of installing a full 18-hole disc golf course on the Mostowy Property. CLA Engineers, Inc., is updating the Camp Oakdale maps and the maintenance staff is installing kiosks in which the park map and rules will be posted. The Holiday Light Parade will be held on Sunday, December 8, at 5:00 p.m.

14. Appointments and Resignations

- a. To Consider and Act on a motion to re-appoint Chuck Longton to the Planning & Zoning Commission, with a term to expire on December 12, 2028.
Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, Motion carried.
- b. To Consider and Act on a motion to re-appoint Daniel R. Dunn to the Youth Advisory Board, with a term to expire on December 22, 2026.
Motion made by Councilor Sabilia, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, Motion carried.

- c. To Consider and Act on a motion to waive the waiting period for appointments, Rule 14C of the Town Council Rules of Procedure, for the Water & Sewer Commission. Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Jaskiewicz. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, Motion carried.
- d. To Consider and Act on a motion to appoint Deane Terry to the Water & Sewer Commission, with a term to expire on November 13, 2028. Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Jaskiewicz. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, Motion carried.
- e. To Consider and Act on a motion to re-appoint Deborah Suarez to the Commission on Aging with a term to expire on November 9, 2027. Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, 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 Montville Police Department Lt. Radford's report (item 11)*
Mayor Bunnell expressed his appreciation to Montville Police Department Lt. Radford for his hard work and efforts in moving the project along.

16. New Business

- a. **Resolution #2024-95. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to refund taxes due to overpayments and corrections in the amount of \$4,642.18 (four thousand six hundred forty-two dollars and eighteen cents) as requested by the Tax Collector. (Councilor May)
Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: None. Roll call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.
- b. **Resolution #2024-96. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to set the 2025 regular monthly meeting dates of the Town Council on the second Monday of every month, excluding holidays that will be scheduled on the Wednesday of that week. The scheduled meeting dates are as follows: January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9, July 14, August 11, September 8, October 15 (Wednesday), November 10, December 8. All meetings will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers. (Councilor May)
Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion: None. Roll call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.
- c. To Consider and Act on a Motion to discuss the Agreement between the Montville Board of Education and Montville Administrators Association for the period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2028. (Councilor Jaskiewicz)
Board of Education (BOE) Chairperson Wills Pike reported that the negotiation process between the Negotiation Team and the Montville Administrators Association, which began in early August, was reasonable, rational, and respectful. Prior to their meetings, the administrative settlements of other districts were reviewed. One of the key outcomes included a new three-step salary schedule replacing the existing 85% placement system for new administrators, which lacked any clear definition and could be perceived as arbitrary. Under the new system, individuals at the top step will receive

an annual increase of 2.5%. An exception was made for the two Special Education Supervisors who will receive an additional \$2,500.00 in the first year along with three additional workdays, and a 2.5% annual increase thereafter. Health and Dental Plan Contributions will also see an incremental increase of 0.5% per year; plan design changes were also implemented to help reduce costs. In addition, newly hired administrators will not be offered an annuity after July 1, 2025. He expressed his appreciation to everyone involved in the negotiations.

- d. **Resolution #2024-97. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to approve the position description for the Youth Services Program Assistant, with a salary of \$18.00 (eighteen dollars) to \$20.00 (twenty dollars) per hour, as approved and recommended by the Town Administration Rules/Procedure Committee. (Councilor Jaskiewicz)

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: Councilor Jaskiewicz expressed his appreciation to the Human Resources Director for her assistance. Roll call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.

- e. **Resolution #2024-98. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to close Town offices at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 27, 2024 in observance of the Thanksgiving Holiday for non-essential personnel and to award two (2) hours paid time off for Essential Personnel who must remain on the job to be used by the end of the calendar year. (Mayor Bunnell)

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: None. Roll call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Resolution passed.

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

Carol Howard, 23 Bayberry Lane, thanked and commended the Parks & Recreation Commission for maintaining the football field. She also announced that on Saturday, November 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., a Meet & Greet and Recruitment event will be held at the Chesterfield Firehouse. She wished everyone a Happy and Safe Thanksgiving Holiday.

Dan Drainville, *The Day* Newspaper Reporter, corrected a previous comment, stating that the Planning & Zoning Commission is expected to set a Public Hearing date during their next Regular Meeting for the two applications for the proposed housing developments.

Montville Police Department Lt. Radford, who attended the Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting, corrected Reporter Drainville's comment, stating that the next meeting is scheduled for December 10 and a Public Hearing date will not be scheduled for the proposed developments.

18. Remarks from the Councilors and the Mayor

Councilor Yuchniuk thanked the Department Heads for attending this evening's meeting and for their hard work. He wished everyone a good holiday.

Councilor Lathrop echoed Councilor Yuchniuk's comments and also thanked the members of the community for all of their efforts and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Councilor Sabilia also thanked everyone for attending this evening's meeting and caring for the Town of Montville. He, too, wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Mayor Bunnell added that he attended a well-attended Mohegan Fire Company Banquet and expressed his appreciation to the Fire Company for their contributions to the

community. He reminded everyone to attend the Holiday Parade on December 8 and wished everyone a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving holiday.

Councilor Southard, having witnessed the Youth Center during its busy hours and the hard work of the staff firsthand, expressed her pleasure in supporting the pay rate increases. She clarified that the “Give our Tin Man Back a Heart” campaign is a volunteer-run effort funded through donations and grants. She reminded everyone to attend the Holiday Market this Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., at Tyl Middle School and the Holiday Light Parade. She wished everyone a nice holiday.

Councilor Jaskiewicz also thanked the Department Heads for attending the meeting and providing an updated report. He wished everyone a Happy and Safe Holiday.

Councilor Caron also thanked the Department Heads and commended the Mayor for his hard work and care for the town, including attending the town’s board and commission meetings. He also congratulated the Mohegan Fire Company Chief, thanked the community for attending their meeting, and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Chairperson May concurred with Councilor Caron’s comment regarding the Mayor’s efforts and involvement. He reminded everyone to keep the town’s residents-in-need during this holiday season in mind and encouraged them to take advantage of the energy assistance program. He wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and a nice time with their families.

19. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Lathrop. to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, 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