

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Parks & Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting – January 15, 2025 -- 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, Vice-Chair Matt Beaupre, Commissioners Noah Carver, Jon Chase, John Plikus, and Mary Hillman. Commissioners William Barlow, Morgan Matthewson and Deborah Schober were absent.

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

4. Alternations to the Agenda – None

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

Chairperson Stone asked three (3) times for remarks. Mayor Bunnell remarked on Agenda Item 10.E, Parks Master Plan, noting that the Commission should have received the drawings from CLA Engineers with an estimation on costs. He favors the plan to relocate the intersection at Oxoboxo Road and Route 163 not only as a safety issue but also for Camp Oakdale to increase parking. Although the plan is costly, there may be grants that can be applied for and he was made aware of one last week. If the Commission considers this idea it can be forwarded to the Town Council. Rebecca Rothholtz of 63 Beechwood Road, Oakdale addressed the concern about adults dancing with children. She read her letter to the Commission into the record about this year being her third dance season with Ms. Lana but her first year that includes ballet. In her letter, she explains that the girls in the ballet class do not have an issue with her and another adult attending the class. She also noted that the Parks and Recreation office was aware of her enrollment in the class as she called and registered over the phone for a previous session this year. Therefore, she does not understand why it has become an issue in addition to her having two (2) of her children enrolled in dance classes as well. She also explained that she and another adult had expressed an interest in taking ballet class and spoke of the ability of Ms. Lana to use her judgment to move existing dancers into appropriate classes and she feels this decision making process should remain in place. Chairperson Stone noted that these comments refer to Agenda, Item 11.D.

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

- a. The Meeting Minutes of December 18, 2024.

Motion by Commissioner Carver; seconded by Commissioner Hillman to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 18, 2024. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor.**
Motion carried.

7. **Recreation Director's Report January 2025.**

Recreation Director Bushway reported on items from his December 2024 report as follows:

- The hoops have been installed at the Camp Oakdale basketball courts. The lines on the court and the final grooming will be done in the spring.
 - Desjardins Park only has one (1) coat of asphalt applied to the basketball court; the baskets will go back up in the spring. The contractor is not pleased with the first coating of asphalt that has the consistency of gravel, and it may need to be grinded and redone. It was noted that one of the Recreation trash cans was run over in the course of work being done. The condition of the fence that is only on one side of the Park is shabby. Public Works Director Carlson will get quotes for replacing it. Commissioner Chase inquired about discussion at the last meeting concerning the contractor who had done some work but had not been awarded the contract; Director Bushway reported that the contractor was awarded the contract.
 - The bids for the metal building for purposes of storage to be placed between building 1 and building 2 came in higher than anticipated and was discussed at a meeting yesterday.
 - The Community Booklet is out and will be sent to homes in Town.
 - An email was sent to Barry Ward regarding pickleball classes or a league, but he will not be available this year as he is taking care of a family member. Chairperson Stone inquired if anyone else had been approached; Town Councilor Southard reported Groton has a great program and suggested they be contacted.
- Chairperson Stone inquired if the newsletter has been posted on the webpage. Director Bushway reported that the IT Director was on vacation; Mayor Bunnell reported he will be back tomorrow.

8. **Report from Finance.**

Director Bushway reported that there are still expenditures that are not shown on the financial report for the Holiday Parade. The portable toilets at a cost of \$600 was donated for the parade and also for Trick-or-Trunk. The \$600 will be used to purchase additional lights and decorations. The deficit on refunds refers to rentals for facilities which will be finalized in June. There may be savings for summer camp as some of the older counselors may not return, a savings of \$3,000. Chairperson Stone inquired if all authorized 079 expenses are shown on the report; the Director reported that not shown are \$22,000 for the pavilion and \$8,000 for electrical work. As for the \$3,000, Town Councilor Southard reported no vote was needed, instead a purchase order will be written out of the account by the Public Works Director. The Chairperson asked the Director to check to make sure all authorized expenditures from the account have been accounted for.

9. **February Newsletter.**

Director Bushway reported on the upcoming Easter Egg Hunts and remarked that for the last 14 years the Oxoboxo Masons have split the cost for the eggs with the Department. This year, the

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Department will purchase all of the eggs at a cost of about \$800 for 6,000 eggs that will be paid out of the budget and from special revenue.

10. Unfinished Business.

a. Projects and funding status:

1) Desjardins Park Basketball Court replacement

Chairperson Stone remarked that this item had already been discussed, and some work is pending completion.

2) Camp Oakdale Basketball Court replacement

Chairperson Stone remarked that this item is done but needs seal coat and lines done in the spring.

b. Job Description Committee

1) Carver, Chase, Hillman, Stone

Chairperson Stone reported that a time to meet is still being figured out. Commissioner Chase noted that meeting earlier would be a tough for him and proposed meeting 1—2 times per week on alternate nights. Does the meeting have to be on a week night per Commissioner Carver? Commissioner Hillman reported that it does and suggested meeting at 7:00 p.m. on a different night in her office given its open door policy, if there is no other option. Furthermore, she stated that pushing off the dates needs to stop—get it done and completed was her request. Commissioner Chase stated that his schedule should not get in the way of setting a meeting. Chairperson Stone remarked that he would check on dates with the Town Clerk; Mayor Bunnell noted that Rooms 202 and 203 are also available.

c. Website Improvement

Chairperson Stone remarked that there was nothing on this item to report.

d. Carnival Committee Update

Chairperson Stone reported that the subcommittee had asked for a 5-year contract with the carnival vendor. The dates for this year are confirmed; years 2-5 are blank on the contract. Director Bushway reached out to the vendor last week.

e. Park Master Plan

Chairperson Stone thanked Mayor Bunnell for his opinion for one (1) of the options concerning the Plan. Three (3) options for massive parking, pavement at the dog park, a splash pad and paved areas for Public Works were produced but none were what the Commission sought. Some options had 200 parking spaces that were not requested. The Commission was more interested in planting shrubs and trees as funds allowed for them. Commissioner Chase wanted an overall plan that would be accommodated over time as resources allowed. Safety is the basic bones of the plan and per funds from the legislature, a town green, and moving roads are an upfront priority to other wants and needs. Asphalt was discussed by the Commission regarding parking areas; the plan was to eliminate maintenance nightmares noting there are standards concerning water incursion and parking. Discussed by the Commission, was sitting with the engineer to talk about its wants but it was noted that it had already done. Comments should be sent to the CLA as to what the Commission wants so the park is not simply just a parking lot, per Mayor Bunnell. Handicap parking requirements east on the north/south where access to the park was proposed by Commissioner Beaupre. Town Councilor Southard remarked on floods and chaos regarding the drive through into the Farmers Market that is a safety and fall risk for the handicapped. It was noted that the Farmers Market in Bozrah has gravel and grass—Town Counselor Southard and Commissioner Hillman noted that Bozrah has more volunteers and workers who direct traffic.

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Initially the Commission requested plans for the pavilion and the dog park area noting that most of the vendors extend into the parking lot. What are we trying to accomplish was asked by Commissioner Carver—extra parking or beautification as a middle ground must be determined. The Commission must define what it wants according to Commissioner Hillman. There are five (5) persons on the Farmers Market Committee and three (3) of them are vendors. Promotion efforts through a church at St. John’s Lady of Luke will be initiated but there is a lot of the work involved with the Farmers Market that people do not want to do. Chairperson Stone has a spreadsheet that he sent to convey to CLA; Commission plans per the walkarounds conducted were to be included in the Plan. He noted the repaving is included in the CIP; Director Bushway suggested phasing of the project; quotes from CLA for the purpose of the budget was proposed by Commissioner Beaupre.

f. Instructor/1059 Contract Revisions

Mayor Bunnell reported that there has been no feedback from the Town Attorney on this item.

11. New Business

a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Elect 2025 Parks and Recreation Commission Officers as follows: Chair—Rocky Stone; Vice-Chair—William Barlow Secretary—Morgan Matthewson.

Motion by Commissioner Carver; seconded by Commissioner Hillman to Elect 2025 Parks and Recreation Commission Officers as follows: Chair—Rocky Stone; Vice-Chair—William Barlow Secretary—Morgan Matthewson. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

b. To Consider and Act on Motion to Approve the 2025-2026 Recreation Budget.

Motion by Commissioner Carver; seconded by Commission Beaupre to approve the FY2025-2026 Recreation Budget. Discussion: Chairperson Stone wants to assure that the wage increase for part-time staff to \$16.35/hour and funds paid back for rentals are included in the budget. Commissioner Hillman remarked that since we may not get back all summer staff counselors it may increase revenue. Director Bushway noted that salary increases are done by the Finance Department. **Motion to Withdraw** by Commissioner Stone; seconded by Commissioner Beaupre to approve the FY2025-2026 Recreation Budget. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried. Motion to Amend** by Commissioner Hillman; seconded by Commission Carver to approve the FY2025-2026 Recreation Budget in the amount of \$355,521. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried. (Roll Call vote not taken)**

c. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2025-2030.

Motion by Commissioner Carver; seconded by Commissioner Hillman. Discussion: Chairperson Stone noted information from the walkarounds were agreed upon by Public Works and director Bushway. Information from previous Capital Improvement Plans were updated and added. It is not known if the Town has staff to obtain pricing. The engineer will be back in Town next week regarding the same. **Motion to Withdraw** by Chairperson Stone; seconded by Commissioner Carver to approve the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY2025-2030. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried. Motion to Amend** by Chairperson Stone; seconded by Commissioner Carver to approve the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY2025-2030 in the amount of \$44,332,000. **Roll Call vote: In favor:** Commissioners Beaupre, Chase, Carver, Hillman, Plikus, Stone. **Opposed:** none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

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d. Instructor/1099 Contract Revisions

Chairperson Stone reported that feedback from the Town Attorneys is still pending. Mayor Bunnell reported that he had spoken to and reminded the attorneys today on having a better contract.

e. Recreation program age grouping discussion.

Chairperson Stone remarked that for many years some recreation programs were presented for ages 8 and up and/or ages 5 and up, information lifted from the booklet. Per the signup page for programs for fall classes, the age default per the system was ages 6-99; but the ages for winter dance classes only was changed to ages 6-18. Some who are over the age limit called the Recreation Department were allowed to register for dance classes but adults who wish to participate in the teen class do so per the discretion of the dance program instructor. The Commission questioned why the 6-18 age restriction was being enforced now for the winter classes but was not the case for registration for fall classes. Director Bushway reported there was no awareness of the age restriction until now. It was explained by Commissioner Hillman that there was no desire to squash anyone's desire to connect with children or to be physically active. She inquired whether adult participation in the dance class could be left to the discretion of the instructor who is an active member thus having the authority to make that decision; her point was considered to be a good one. Lana Davidson, dance instructor, reported that two adults attempted to take one of the currently age-restricted dance classes and were denied based upon their age. Additionally, the new age restriction was not discussed with her and not known to the Recreation Department although it had taken prior registrations from the two affected adults by phone. Also, it was noted that no adults take the teen dance classes who are not related to a parent on teen within the dance community. Commissioner Chase raised points concerning the issue of the instructor making the decision, the appropriateness of some programs/activities as different activities are more appropriate for all age groups. Another point was whether the decision would be a violation of some law and/or insurance. The age default only occurred with the winter dance class and were all children's classes according to Director Bushway. A default and inconsistency in communication by the Recreation Department with families leading to frustration is the result, per Commissioner Hillman. Discussion continued regarding online registration for classes; any stipulation of age range of classes per Mrs. Davidson's contract; investing in instructor decision making and possible discrimination; safety protocol in place, and the fact that anyone could signup for the class prior to the winter classes. The lack of respect generated by the lack of communication about the age change would have been different with either a timely phone call or email. Is this a legal issue; what will the new policy be for the end user; and compliance with the law and insurance directives were questions raised by the Commission. Institution of a grandfather clause and an adult who has a child in class could be overridden with further consideration conducted in executive session were other topics and options discussed by the Commission. **Motion** by Commissioner Hillman; seconded by Commissioner Carver that the Commission overrides the current age limit of 18 to allow two (2) adults dancers to participate in a Parks & Recreation teen dance class. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor* Commissioners Beaupre, Carver, Chase, Hillman, Plikus. *Opposed:* Commissioner Stone. **5-1-0. Motion carried.**

12. Communications.

- a. Letter from Kathryn Linda*
- b. Letter from Brittany Casey*

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- c. Letter from Hannah O'Donnell*
 - d. Letter from Kate O'Donnell*
 - e. Letter from Lana Davison*

*Letters of support were read into the record by Recording Secretary Gathers to allow two (2) adult dancers to participate in a teen dance class per the approval of the Commission. Lana Davidson, the dance instructor, documented that adults and teens throughout the years have attended classes together without incident.

13. Remarks from the Public (3-minute limit).

Chairperson Stone asked three (3) times for remarks. Harold Davison remarked that Lana Davison was caught unawares by the age restriction for the teen classes for the winter session nothing that both sides must take responsibility. He questioned why the change but was thankful everyone were cool-headed. He also noted that those not within the dance family are not allowed into the program. Mr. Davison was happy with the decision made by the Commission and had hope for better communication. Rebecca Rothholz asked for clarification of the age issue situation for the dance class and reported there was no complaint lodged by her or the other adult dance class registrant. She wondered what direction would be taken once the matter was escalated to the Commission and Mayor Bunnell. Mayor Bunnell remarked about the age change stating it was not to target the dance program and spoke of checks and balances, safeguarding children, taking responsibility for the decision regarding the changed motive.

14. Remarks from Town Council Liaison Southard.

Town Councilor Southard thanked the Commission for putting forward a good budget. As to the dance program concern discussed this evening, she remarked that as a teacher she is a mandated reporter and apologized for the issue with communication. She was not aware that parents were dancing with kids noting that safety is paramount for her.

15. Remarks from Parks & Recreation Director Bushway. -- None

16. Remarks from Commissioners.

Commissioner Chase remarked that Mayor Bunnell had summed up the dance class concern that will be addressed in executive session regarding the law and insurance matters. He noted the Commission having been blindsided by all of this, unsure how the problem will resolve but expressed that the Commission had done the best it could and is appreciative of Mayor Bunnell and his responsibility. Commissioner Beaupre apologized for not being present at meetings. Commissioner Hillman appreciated everyone's input, the Mayor taking responsibility, not being presented with the information regarding the dance class age matter in a fair, equitable manner, and if the Commission should wait to respond. Commissioner Beaupre wants to know the Town's standpoint to make a decision.

17. Adjournment.

Motion by Chairperson Stone: seconded by Commissioner Barlow to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted by,

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Gloria J. Gathers
Town of Montville -- Recording Secretary/Minutes Clerk

**AN AUDIO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE ON
THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WEBSITE.**