

TOWN OF MONTVILLE -- PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
Special Meeting – February 6, 2025 -- 5:30 PM
Town Council Chambers – Montville Town Hall

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.

Vice-Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. Roll Call.

Present were Vice-Chair Stephen Stewart and Commissioners Brian Baker, William Bauer, Tracy Callaghan and Mickey Gillette. Chairperson Murphy and Commissioner Perkins were absent from the meeting. A quorum was present.

4. Remarks from the Public. (Agenda items only—three-minute limit.)

Vice-Chair Stewart asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

5. New Business.

- a** To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve the FY2025-2026 Public Safety Budgets.

Lt. Radford reviewed the Police Protection FY2025-2026 budget that included a narrative that addresses the proposed increases for said budget. He noted two (2) changes for the Dispatch budget that were updated after having been sent to the Commission. Five Thousand Dollars was added to Line Item #51070, PT Dispatchers' Salaries as it was inadvertently left blank as well as an increase to Line Item #53029, Maintenance & Upkeep from \$4,000 to \$51,290. The Lieutenant responded to questions from the Commission concerning the Police Protection budget as follows:

- Line Items #51016 Secretary and Admin Asst. Salary; Line Item #51030 Chief of Police; Line Item #51040 Police Salaries; and 5#1075 PT Clerical fall under collective bargaining. Line Item #51100 Overtime is not a part of that category. The Finance Department was unable to provide the salary information in time for the meeting.
- Line Item #51106 Overtime -Grants—The Lieutenant explained why this item “hurts us” noting that any funds received and put into this line item is counted toward this

budget. This line item acts as a revolving account; funds are paid by the Town, and the State is invoiced quarterly for reimbursement.

- Line Item #53028 Law Enforcement Programs—Funds from this line item were increased to support mandatory subscription fees and memberships for accreditation, the scheduling program, gun club membership, and the regional swat team. Power Phone, technically required by law was viewed recently in Groton—the program meshes with EMD medical calls and feeds to NexGen that has an expensive upfront cost and a fee annually. Increased costs is the factor for these programs and was accomplished with the assistance of IT. Chief Blanchette spoke with the Power Phone company that agreed to cut the cost, \$22,000, over two (2) years. So, the \$51,290 amount would be less \$22,299.50—the first and second installments would be \$28,990.50 and the third \$7,000.

Lt. Radford also responded to questions regarding increased costs for some Dispatch line items mentioned previously in order to accommodate allotted time off for staff and to maintain the current level of service. He gave an update on the status of the Animal Control Facility reporting that work on the project is tentatively expected to begin March 1 weather dependent and that the cost for propane is minimal. The building maintenance was discussed with Public Works. Other increases include vet fees as more animals are being housed and donations are heavily relied upon. It was also explained that propane is usually used for heat to smaller facilities.

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Bauer to approve the FY2025-2026 Police Protection budget in the amount of \$667,000 in addition to salary information from the Finance Department. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the FY2025-2026 Dispatch budget in the amount of \$338,741. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the FY2025-2026 budget in the amount of \$78,400. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Bauer to approve the FY2025-2026 Animal Control budget in the amount of \$32,700. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the FY2026-2020 Capital Improvement Plan in the amount of \$48,211.16. Discussion: Lt. Radford responded to a question by Commission Baker regarding the ten tasers.. The Lieutenant reported he was able to cut the cost with the vendor with no increase over five (5) years. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Commissioner Baker thanked Lt. Radford for his budget explanation. Chief Blanchette reported on having sent an email to the Commission and the Town Council regarding a check he received for a little over \$11,000 from the Stanton K-9 Foundation in Massachusetts having reached out to it following the loss of K-9 Officer Barrett. The Foundation covered the cost and the armor for K-9 Officer Barrett as well as all of the startup costs for K-9 Gunner that includes acquiring and training the dog. Officer Moore will be K-9 Gunner's partner and the only request from the Foundation was for a picture of the two (2) of them. Commissioner Baker inquired about the number of police cars replaced and the mileage of them. Lt. Radford reported that three (3) vehicles come off the road each year with mileage of 120,000- 140,000 but they try to keep them at less miles. These vehicles are recycled to the SROs who are going back and forth from the schools but who take advantage of the newer ones while on overtime. The Lieutenant confirmed that State bids are sought for the vehicles purchased from MHQ a/k/a McGovern that outfits and letters them.

Vice-Chair Stewart reported that all of the fire companies have an annual increase of 3.1%. Mohegan Fire Chief Suarez who called in to the meeting said the increase was adequate and they will get by with ambulance billing. Commissioner Baker noted equipment repairs and issues regarding the same and the decrease of the line item by \$10,000 and said he would ask each fire chief the same questions. Chief Suarez mentioned purchasing chainsaws and other tools and having to constantly do radio repairs. Regarding turnout gear his oldest dates back to 2019 and is tested annually, and his operating budget is anticipated to be \$480,000 this year. Chief Messer reported on the budget changes for his fire company—the cost for fuel and training (with money from the State) is higher; his operating budget is \$350,000 and the Town just purchased five (5) turnout gear that was tested in May. Chief Truex reported that fuel, training, heating oil/electricity are higher and were increased, and equipment needs, new versus replacement. His company also does its own snow removal, plowing, sanding/salting and plow maintenance. The Chief also reported that the Town purchased turnout gear for each fire company but helmets, gloves, flash hoods and boots will be purchased out of the current budget noting that some are nearing 10 years old. Chief Turner is not available as he is working, but his budget was submitted and it was noted if there are questions that they can be asked of him later, per Vice-Chair Stewart. Commissioner Baker also noted that the amount of his operating budget is not known.

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Bauer to approve the FY2025-2026 operating budget for the Oakdale Fire Company in the amount of \$103,000, the Chesterfield Fire Company in the amount of \$103,000, the Montville Fire Company in the amount of \$103,000, and Mohegan Fire Company in the amount of \$103,000. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Building Official Coulter gave remarks on the Building Department budget. He reported that State law requires that municipalities must have a Building Department, but it provides no funds to run it. The budget must cover all and the Building Official intends to speak with Mayor Bunnell about revenue enhancement. The Building Official summarized his budget

narrative and a 3-year staffing plan for the Department and his employment experience working with SCCOG and that of the two (2) former Town Building officials who are picking up the slack and holding the Department together, as well as training a potential residential inspector pending his passing the State exam. The Department budget represents what is actually being done rather than a hybrid 2-man operation and reflects contractor costs that includes fringe benefits, general municipal overhead; air conditioning/heat/electricity for the physical plant, temporary coverage, legal support (from the Mayor's budget) in addition to recruitment, training and other general overall items. The Building Official concluded that money was made and lost over the year but the return of \$180,000 may be above the operating budget—not a profit as all other things must be covered. Commissioner Baker thanked Building Official Coulter for the information he provided, and the Department notes that were very helpful.

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Callaghan to approve the FY2025-2026 Building Department budget in the amount of \$442,635 as presented. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Bauer to approve the Building Department Capital Non-reoccurring component in the amount of \$40,000. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Fire Marshal Barnes reported to the Commission that his FY2025-2026 budget has some increases that are due to the present economy. The increased cost for uniforms is for the two (2) new hires currently being sought and replacement items for others—work shirts, pants, boots. The firemen's salary is not included on the budget and career staff are starting contract negotiations soon. Training and conferences costs were inadvertently left off of the budget. The Fire Marshal's office handles the repair costs for the apparatus at all four (4) fire companies. Four (4) sets of turnout gear and five (5) replacement sets were purchased through the Town. The Uniform line item includes allowance for cleaning uniforms that requires special washes as is gear is washed at the station. Commissioner Baker inquired about the 3-year and 7-year inspection/replacement of turnout gear; the gear has been visually inspected but not hydrostatically per the Fire Marshal. The Commissioners asked if this item is something for next year's budget and whether the cost can be broken down for the same as testing of equipment would be supported. Fire Marshal Barnes reported that he is looking for two (2) vehicles as his is a 2012 with 118,000 miles on it and the Deputy Marshal's has 108,000 miles on the vehicle he uses. Two (2) new pickup trucks the same as that of the Police Department with a cap on it for slide-out gear are being sought. Discussion was had concerning firemen's salaries. The 2024-2025 base salary for two (2) new firefighters at \$63,576 each would total \$127,156, plus the cumulative amount of \$958,664 adopted last year totals \$1,085, 820. Overtime cannot be accounted for, per Mayor Bunnell, but did report that last year's overtime was based on 10% or \$1,842,066, a \$200,000 increase for two (2) firefighters. With a full staff of 16 firefighters, a firefighter salary would range from \$160,00 -- \$180,000 and only cover sick pay, overtime, and special events or a midrange of \$170,000.

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Bauer to approve the FY2025-2026 Fire Protection budget in the amount of \$1,842,066. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

The Emergency Management budget was reviewed. Fire Marshal Barnes explained that half of his salary is paid by a grant from the State Department of Emergency Management via Homeland Security. The salary for the Secretary falls under collective bargaining and that of the Deputy Fire Marshal under the firefighters. Line Item #52120, Millstone Drill Expenses includes purchases for whiteboards, dry erase markers etc. and flyers that will be purchased concerning flooding fall under Line Item #53019, Miscellaneous Supplies. The Fire Marshal and Deputy Fire Marshal Meigel attend conferences charged to Training and Conferences, Line Item #53004. Charges for maintenance and repair for gas and meters are under Line Item #53021. Line Item #53052, Office Equipment replacement is being adopted by the Town. As to Everbridge, Line Item 54028, Mayor Bunnell reported that the contract agreement was rescinded. A replacement program has not been decided nor where it will be relocated. The computation for salaries is the total for Fire Marshal, Secretary, and Deputy Fire Marshal of \$127,399 and the 2026 request of \$20,500 for a total of \$147,899.

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Callaghan to approve the FY2025-2026 Emergency Management budget of \$147,899. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

As to the Fire Marshal budget, Fire Marshal Barnes noted a correction to Line Item # 52200, to read “ESO” not “EOS” Inspection Software. Line Item #53015, Uniforms was increased from \$500 to \$1027 due to damaged clothing from inspections and the increased cost for the uniforms from Capitol Uniforms. Reference Materials, Line Item #53024 was increased from \$1,000 to \$2000 to accommodate the cost for a new code book. Deputy Fire Marshal Meigel explained the cost increase for Line Item #53038, Fire Prevention Program Supplies as there were more events for fire safety and his desire to extend the program to the middle school, day care facilities, and high school seniors before they go off to college as recommended by the Town Council. There are currently three (3) licensed day care facilities all on Route 32. The Marshal noted that the DFM is a certified life safety instruction and spoke on a juvenile issue regarding a fire started in a home. Commissioner Bauer commented on having a good recruitment program for the fire departments to bring kids in and inquired if it exists. The DFM reported that Chesterfield as the only fire department assisted for Safety Day. The Fire Marshal also referred to recruitment day at schools which Montville does not have.

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the Fire Marshal budget in the amount of \$128,219. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Baker, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* none. **5-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

Lastly, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) was discussed, and a question was raised about the two (2) mobile radios that are being requested for use by the Fire Marshal and the Deputy Fire Marshal in addition to the 20 portable radios for his office and the career firefighters. Fire Marshal Barnes reported that he made a request last year for these items; they were not approved by the Town Council, nor was he given feedback on the status or involved in that process of the \$300,000 approved by the Town Council for portables. Therefore, he has made another request for them as he is not involved in the radio system upgrade process. Commissioner Baker commented on the current radio upgrade program that would be inclusive of everything and concerned about the splitting of costs noting that the Fire Marshal's request would be at a higher cost for the portable radios at \$71,000. He was concerned about having better communication and clarification. Mayor Bunnell asked for clarification on the Fire Marshal's request for radios: the Fire Marshal explained that the cost would be for replacements and antennas only. Discussion was also had by Fire Marshal Barnes that all should have a radio referencing the event of a major storm and the radio that has an identifier and an emergency button, the same ones that are being carried now. Commissioner Baker remarked on there being four (4) radio and a couple of spares per shift and proposed pushing out the request by the Fire Marshal for another year for meeting and discussion purposes. As to the three (3) gearboxes, they will shipped, have to be assembled and have wheels on them. Commissioner Baker noted the gearboxes are not secured; Fire Marshal Barnes was not concerned as there are cameras in each fire company and there have been no incidents of theft. The concern of the Fire Marshal was to get the gear off the floor at Chesterfield and out of the volunteers' lockers at Mohegan and Oakdale as the lockers hold eight (8) sets.

Motion by Commissioner Gillette: seconded by Commissioner Bauer to approve the Fire Marshal Capital Improvement Program for FY2025-2026 in the mount of \$89,268. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Bauer, Stewart, Callaghan, Gillette. *Opposed:* Commissioner Baker. **4-1-0. Motion carried.**

6. Remarks from the Public. (three-minute limit).

Fire Chief Suarez remarked that Mohegan Fire Company has an area for new lockers if obtained.

7. Remarks from the Mayor.

Mayor Bunnell remarked that it will be a tough year and not a good one for budgets, but he will do the best he can.

8. Remarks from Town Council Liaison. None

9. Remarks from Commissioners.

Commissioner Bauer thanked the Public Safety staff for attending the meeting and explaining their budgets, which helped a lot. He also appreciated their effort with their budgets.

Commissioner Callaghan asked that everyone drive safety due to ice. Commissioner Baker remarked that salaries does not show up on the budgets nor accountability for vehicle fuel i.e. fuel spent by the Fire Marshal. He noted that it would be nice to know when Police vehicles are being replaced and added that fire departments do need trucks. Commissioner Bauer inquired about receiving input regarding Police Department vehicles and the same for the fire department.

10. Adjournment.

Motion by Commissioner Baker; seconded by Commissioner Bauer to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 5-0-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted by:
Gloria J. Gathers
Recording Secretary, Town of Montville

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