

**TOWN OF MONTVILLE**  
**Parks & Recreation Commission**  
**Regular Meeting – March 19, 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 6:35 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance.**

All stood and pledged the flag.

**3. Roll Call.**

Present were Chairperson Rocky Stone, Commissioners William Barlow, Jon Chase, John Plikus, Mary Hillman, Morgan Matthewson and Deborah Schober. Commissioners Matt Beaupre and Noah Carver and were absent.

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

**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. Rebecca Rothholtz, 63 Beechwood Road, Oakdale, remarked that she spoke at the January Commission meeting and has since spoken with Mayor Bunnell who reported that the Town insurance company wants to separate adult dancers from children's Recreation dance classes. She noted having questions with the conversations after having spoken with Recreation Administrative Assistant Aller and addressed that Dance Instructor Davison carries her own insurance. R. Rothholtz noted that L. Davison should be trusted as a contracted employee and the Recreation Department should explore her questions regarding this issue as the story keeps changing. She asked that the problem be fixed that did not exist before. Harold Davison, 9 Doolittle Road, Preston remarked that two (2) meetings ago the issue concerning having adults in children's classes was put on the back burner. If a decision was made why was it not placed on the meeting agenda as the issue had not been decided. H. Davison also addressed having the adults and children going to the bathroom and having the backdoor always open; a security concern for L. Davison leaving the building at night.

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

- a. The Meeting Minutes of January 15, 2025.

**Motion** by Commissioner Plikus; seconded by Commissioner Barlow to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 15, 2025. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 7-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

- b. The Informational Meeting Minutes of February 19, 2025.

**Motion** by Commissioner Schober; seconded by Commissioner Matthewson to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 19, 2025. Discussion: Commissioner Chase questioned whether a vote should be taken since the meeting was informational. Recording Secretary Gathers confirmed the need to vote. **Voice vote: 7-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

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

Chairperson Stone reported that a monthly report was not received from Recreation Director Bushway. Recreation Administrative Assistant Aller called the Chairperson stating she would send the information to him and to Mayor Bunnell. The Chairperson noted that the Director was successful with securing Tyl Middle School for summer camp and the dance recital has been confirmed for the high school. The high school graduation ceremony will be held at Dodge Stadium on June 13, 2025, one (1) week before the carnival.

8. **Report from Finance.**

Chairperson Stone reported that a finance report was not received.

9. **April Newsletter.**

Chairperson Stone reported that a newsletter was not received but Recreation Administrative Assistant Aller will try to put something together.

10. **Unfinished Business.**

- a. Projects and funding status:

- 1) Desjardins Park Basketball Court replacement

Chairperson Stone reported that the basketball court needed sealer finish and lines to be painted but that everything else was done.\*

- 2) Camp Oakdale Basketball Court replacement

Chairperson Stone reported that the surface of the basketball court was unsatisfactory, done late in the season, and had a lot of stone which the contractor acknowledged according to Public Works Director Carlson.\*

\*Chairperson Stone reached out to Public Works Director on these items for information but there was no follow-up. He also responded to a question by Commissioner Chase as to how long the pickleball courts would be closed; the Chairperson did not know but reported that there is a sign for the courts waiting to be installed.

- 3) Camp Oakdale Trail Map

Chairperson Stone reported that at the last meeting Recreation Director Bushway presented a trail map and commented that discussion could occur but wondered if more time was needed. He described the property as being oddly shaped but urged the Commission to review the map. The

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Commission discussed components of the map—a notation for connections between the main access and the road and indicators that show areas where driving is not permitted; a defined walkway, and the measure of all of the trails and a map of them for visitors; and the timeline for completion.

b. Job Description Committee

1) Carver, Chase, Hillman, Stone

Chairperson Stone reported that he would take the blame for the Committee not having met but would figure it out.

c. Website Improvement

Chairperson Stone reported that the website would be upgraded to existing software, WebTrac. The Recreation Administrative Assistant Aller is trying to spend more time using the cloud-based product. The Chairperson noted many registered today for dance classes and whether there was an easier way for signup for those who previously registered.

d. Carnival Committee update

Commissioner Matthewson reported that the Carnival contract has been signed, the fireworks are scheduled, and eight (8) food trucks will be participating. Attendance will be monitored by the Carnival vendor and communication has been made with a magician. Chairperson Stone noted there will be more help now since the vendor is handling attendance.

e. Community Center Building Committee Update

Chairperson Stone reported that interviews are being conducted for the Committee. Mayor Bunnell reported that no progress has been made and no plans to move forward but requests have been sent to Senator Osten concerning funding. Commissioner Barlow remarked that he would like an answer to form the Committee and to start something since discussion has been ongoing for 20 years. Commissioner Chase reiterated a point made by Commissioner Beaupre that the prime need is an indoor gym space; Commissioner Barlow suggested building two (2) gyms. Chairperson Stone reported that conservation was the focus of the previous committee and whether the existing Community Center can be brought up to code. The Commission wanted to tear it down and build a new space and add a gym to it that was discussed for a year. A relook should be done at the makeup of the Committee. Town Councilor Southard reported that the Committee is need of three (3) additional members. Commissioner Chase inquired why cannot other members of the Commission serve as committee members. Responses included that the Commissioners are taxpayers and what if you cannot get anyone else. Town Councilor Southard will get an answer on the same. Further discussion included the prior committee having reviewed the New London plan and revising it for Town needs, funds for the project and continued delays that will make the cost for the project rise.

## **11. New Business**

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve the Camp Oakdale Pavilion and Dog Park Improvement presentation. *This information will be provided to the Mayor for the purposed of obtaining initial design concepts done for the Commission's recommended improvements to the Camp Oakdale Pavilion and Dog Park areas.*

**Motion** by Chairperson Stone; seconded by Commissioner Schober to Approve the Camp Oakdale Pavilion and Dog Park Improvement presentation. *This information will be provided to the Mayor for the purposed of obtaining initial design concepts done for the Commission's recommended improvements to the Camp Oakdale Pavilion and Dog Park areas..* Discussion: Chairperson

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Stone remarked that some CIP items were discussed at the last meeting and were assembled and sent to CLA Engineers. Projects that require landscape design was also discussed per Commissioner Chase. The Chairperson reported that Director Bushway called him and CLA on that topic and they were told the company does a third-party landscaper. Projects may have to be done in pieces giving consideration to the relocation of the road. Thus, approval of projects already completed will make the project cleaner to review. It was also noted that Public Works Director Carlson was involved in discussion and concerned about parking lot runoff. **Voice vote: 7-0-0, all in favor. Motion carried.**

b. Facility Walk Arouns

Chairperson Stone polled the Commission for its annual review of the Department properties starting now until the end of July as follows:

- 1) Camp Oakdale Recreation Complex—Chairperson Stone / Commissioner Matthewson
- 2) Camp Oakdale Dog Park/Court Complex—Commissioner Schober
- 3) Mostowy Property—Commissioner Chase
- 4) Camp Oakdale Pavilion—Commissioner Plikus
- 5) Oxoboxo Brook Pavilion—Commissioner Plikus
- 6) Schofield Park—Commissioner Carver
- 7) Desjardins Playground—Commissioner Beaupre
- 8) Community Center—Commissioner Barlow
- 9) Kobyluck Field—Commissioner Hillman

**12. Communications.**

a. Complaint to the Mayor regarding adults in children's dance classes.

Chairperson Stone reported that earlier in the week Mayor Bunnell sent a complaint regarding adults taking dance classes with children precipitated by an email received from a Town resident. He noted that this item would be added to this agenda although it was discussed two (2) meetings ago. He also referenced further communication from the Mayor regarding concerns by the Town insurance company and his direction to Recreation Administrative Assistant Aller to refund the registration fee to the dancers. The Chairperson remarked that the decision was taken out of the hands of the Mayor and no further discussion was needed. The question was raised by Commissioner Barlow as to whether the decision was made by the Town and that the dance instructor has insurance. Mayor Bunnell remarked that the Town has liability regarding the issue and that Recreation Director Bushway spoke with the insurance carrier in January and confirmed coverage in place for abuse and molestation but none for youth/adult classes. The Mayor also remarked that he acted and that the decision can be debated, but emphasized that we would be fools to not follow the advice of the insurance company. The Chairperson disagreed with the decision as there was no deviousness by the persons who are not pedestrians, and that the dance session is a continuation of the last one so no one new could sign up for the class. He added that the Commission had a problem last year with a park taken from Recreation Department's purview and noted that in the future the ages for dance participants should be defined. He considered the matter overreach and noted that next year there will be new rules. Commissioner Chase noted the Chairperson's perspectives and passion but remarked that the Commission would be foolish to ignore the advice of the insurance company. He also referenced the authority of the Commission

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per the Town Charter in that the operation of the program is the duty of Recreation Department and the Director of the Department reports to the Mayor. In fairness to the public, the day-to-day operation and the role of the Commission is to make sure that the dance program is up and running and Mayor Bunnell was put in a hard spot to act in the best interest of the entire Town. Commissioner Chase noted the original issue concerned a change in the registration process and at the time, in January, the insurance company was not involved. Chairperson Stone remarked that the Commission will have to pay more attention to what it is asked to do given public complaints to the Mayor. Commissioner Matthewson noted having danced for 16 years and that parents were not allowed in the lobby nor to dance with youth. The Chairperson hoped that the Mayor would review all other classes offered by the Department, judo etc. Commissioner Chase proposed looking at all the other classes, and particularly more adult classes.

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

Chairperson Stone asked three (3) times for remarks. Harold Davison, 9 Doolittle Road, Preston remarked that Recreation Dance Instructor Lana Davison conducts five (5) dance classes per session in addition to the recital held in June. He noted that she does more than what she is paid for. Mr. Davison questioned whether the Town insurance company was concerned about the contact between adults and children in other areas of building and security for the same. He added that there must be six (6) students per class and that was the reason the two (2) adults were added to a children's class. Mr. Davison also remarked that discussion must be had with Recreation Director Bushway, not Mrs. Davison; in addition, to a lot better communication with instructors who are included in other aspects or promotion of the dance program. Mayor Bunnell apologized for any perception concerning diminishing Commission authority demonstrated by Recreation Director Bushway for bringing information back to him. He remarked having used his 42 year career in law enforcement regarding the situation at hand.

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

Town Councilor Southard remarked that she would not be attending the next Commission meeting and would give to Chairperson Stone the information concerning the Community Center Building Committee. She also reported having spoken with Recreation Administrative Assistant Aller about the rosters for dance classes and the many calls she has taken over the last two (2) days for dance class registration. Dance Instructor Lana Davison had asked everyone to call ahead to register and pay for classes, but the volume of calls was crazy as many waited to the last registration date to call. The Town Councilor added Commission issues would be worked on.

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

**16. Remarks from Commissioners.**

Commissioner Chase remarked being glad to know that Recreation Dance Instructor is willing to extend classes for the adult and to look at a dance offering with less students. He is looking forward to discussion with Recreation Director Bushway on the same. Commissioner Barlow confirmed agreement with Commissioner Chase on the dance classes for adults that he is in favor of and agreed a discussion should be had with Director Bushway. Chairperson Stone supports standardizing the dance program and reported having spoken with Recreation Administrative Assistant Aller about taking calls for dance registration and the Department website. He noted

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that dance rosters cannot be prepared if calls are still being received for signups. The Chairperson also remarked that the adult dancer is no risk, and the decision made was not fair to her.

**17. Adjournment.**

**Motion** by Commissioner Chase; seconded by Commissioner Plikus to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 7-0-0, 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.**