

**Town of Montville  
Town Council  
Public Hearing Minutes  
April 7, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.  
Montville Town Hall – Council Chambers**

1. Call to Order  
Chairperson May called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call  
Present were Councilors Caron, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Absent were Councilors Jaskiewicz and Lathrop. Also present was Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr.
4. Public Hearing

**TOWN OF MONTVILLE - NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

The Montville Town Council will hold a public hearing at Montville Town Hall, Council Chambers, 310 Norwich-New London Tpke, Uncasville, CT, on April 7, 2025 at 6:00 P.M. to receive public comment and questions regarding the proposed resolution entitled:

“RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$1,500,000 FOR THE PRESERVATION OF BOND PROPERTY PROJECT AND THE FINANCING OF SAID APPROPRIATION BY THE ISSUANCE OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS OF THE TOWN AND NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCH BONDS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$1,500,000 THEREFOR”

A copy of the full text of the resolution is available for inspection at the Montville Town Clerk’s office during regular office hours and is posted on the Town’s website at [www.townofmontville.org](http://www.townofmontville.org) This document is prepared for the benefit of the public, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation. This document does not represent the intent of the legislative body of Montville for any purpose.

Dated at Montville, CT this 11th day of March, 2025.  
Katie Haring, Town Clerk

Chairperson May recited the published notice for this evening’s Public Hearing regarding the proposed appropriation through the issuance of a General Obligation Bond of an amount not to exceed \$1.5 million for the preservation of the Bond Property Project.

Two (2) items of correspondence were received for the record by the following individuals:

Jeffrey Linkinhoker & Reena Joseph wrote in favor of the Resolution, stating their excitement with “the opportunity to recreate on more than one square mile of forested woodlands, fields, streams, and ponds...with such diverse habitat” and express their surprise that such a large piece of property was still available to be preserved during a time in which land across the country is “routinely gobbled”.

William Pieniadz wrote in opposition to the Resolution, citing it as a donation to the Avalonia Conservancy and a fiscally irresponsible use of taxpayer, state, and federal funds. He also questioned the possible additional public safety costs, including special access equipment and training, future maintenance costs, and the town’s lack of due diligence to investigate the environmental and safety issues on the site.

Chairperson May introduced and invited Avalonia Land Conservancy Representatives Richard Conant, Christopher Kepple, and Elanah Sherman to provide a brief overview of the Bond Property.

Avalonia Board Director Conant provided a brief history of Avalonia, a non-profit organization established in 1968 to preserve and communicate the value and need of natural habitats in Southeastern Connecticut. Primarily a volunteer organization, Avalonia is committed to the conservation of land in perpetuity. These properties not only improve their communities, but also help increase their property values. The Conservancy owns and manages over 100 preserves in New London County and hosts numerous educational hikes, outings, events, and gatherings. Individual management plans — unique to each property and developed following each acquisition — include their long-term goals, rules, restrictions, ecological surveys, trails, restoration plans, uses, and the like. If acquired, the 673-acre property, which abuts other open-spaced lands, would be a fee-simple property that is owned outright by the Conservancy. A portion of the property houses the New London Watershed, which will be restricted to the public. The land houses sensitive run-offs and streams that are deposited into the Watershed. It also serves as a habitat for a variety of wildlife, including osprey, bear, coyote, and deer. They anticipate maintaining the existing fields through agricultural activities and supporting the grassland birds, deer, coyotes, and bats as well as the sizeable, forested areas. The property also includes trails, which may be expanded or shrunk, and an existing road system. In addition, major stewardship projects to remove invasive species and restore certain areas will be conducted. The property will be open to the public, allowing for outdoor exploration, educational programs, and passive recreational activities, as defined by the state. The purchase price of the property is \$5,599,000.00, of which \$3,031,250.00 will be funded by the State/Federal/Avalonia, including the largest grant for open space acquisition by the state. The remaining balance is pending and includes Federal Funding, Foundation Gap Funding, and the \$1.5 million proposed bond that is before the residents for consideration.

In response to public comments received through social media platforms, he stated that the Conservancy was originally incorporated as the Mashantucket Land Trust. As a result of some conflict and confusion when the tribe was recognized by the state, the name was changed to the Avalonia Land Conservancy in 1995; the Conservancy has no affiliation whatsoever with the Mashantucket Tribe. He also reported that the first phase of an Environmental Site Assessment on the property, once an industrial site with underground tanks, was conducted in 2024, and the land was remediated, as required.

In conclusion, the Avalonia Land Conservancy would own the property and any management issues would be addressed by them, as required by the state. There would be no liability to the Town of Montville. The property is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the residents of the Town to help in the acquisition and conservation of a property that serves as an important habitat for wildlife and would provide countless recreational and educational opportunities. They thanked the public for attending this evening's Public Hearing and look forward to listening to their comments.

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

Councilor Yuchniuk called a Point of Order, stating that because the presentation by the Avalonia Land Conservancy was not included on the Agenda, he assumed they were part of the Remarks from the Public. As such, he questioned their ability to exceed the time limitation while the Public is limited to three minutes. Chairperson May stated that, in consultation with the Town Attorney, the summary provided by Avalonia is considered part of the proposed Resolution and is not part of the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Ken Michel, 125 Chapel Hill Road, Oakdale, felt that there were many questions and no answers, including the responsibility of the Fire Departments to extinguish fires caused by

the public, the picking of litter and other rubbish, the safety of the public, and how long their taxes would be raised to support the purchase of the property.

Melissa Yuchniuk, 478 Fire Street, Oakdale, spoke in opposition to the proposed Resolution, which she felt was an unaffordable donation. She felt that the funds should be invested in the Town's already-owned 2,136 acres of open space, which includes conservation areas, sanctuaries, and parks. She questioned how the Town could recommend spending such funds when its Union contracts and Budget have not yet been ratified. If acquired, the Town would experience a loss of revenue, a strain on its resources, and set a precedence for similar proposals. This evening's presentation introduced more concerns and questions with the use of such terms as "potential" and "could be".

Furthermore, without a Management Plan in place, there is no guarantee on the use of the land or the type of recreational activities that will be offered. She urged the Town to invest those funds in our children's education, seniors, roads, and town-owned buildings and land.

Diana Reiss, 1745 Hartford-New London Turnpike, Oakdale, a neighboring resident, expressed her concerns regarding the bonding of the property, which would entail a collaborative partnership that includes continued payments towards its purchase during such uncertain financial times. She also questioned if the Town would be responsible for the pending funds should they become unavailable.

Eric Majewski, 136 Chapel Hill Road, Oakdale, whose property abuts the Bond Property, spoke in opposition to the Resolution, commenting on the minimal services the Town provides in exchange for his annual payment of \$10,000+ in property taxes and the Town's recent allocation of funds for an Animal Control Facility, two Fire Trucks, contract negotiations, the Fishing Pier, and legal costs. He questioned the lack of a Management Plan addressing how the public will be kept off his property and the late timing of the release of the Environmental Report to the public. He also expressed his concerns about the additional costs to the Town for such items as UTVs (Utility Task Vehicles) to extricate hikers from the woods. He stated that the property, which housed a gravel pit is comprised of craters and very few fields and would like his taxpayer funds to be invested in such items as a garbage service, a new Community Center, and afterschool programs.

Karen Duhamel, 1 Fox Hollow Drive, Oakdale, who has toured the property, addressed her concerns to those who spoke in opposition to the Resolution and their responsibility as members of a larger, as well as local, community, citing a 2021 International Panel on Climate Change Study which states that saving old growth forests have a more positive impact than planting new trees, supporting carbon sequestration and release into the atmosphere.

Vince Attwater-Young, 375 Chapel Hill Road, Oakdale, spoke in opposition to the proposed Resolution, citing the lack of funds, the need to address the schools, and a proposed bill that would result in the loss of \$750,000.00 in state funding.

Walt Kobelski, 442 Chesterfield Road, Oakdale, where his family has resided since World War I when Chesterfield Road was a dirt road, questioned who would fund the widening of the road to accommodate the growing traffic.

Tom Buecker, 3 Damato Drive, Oakdale, questioned whether the property could be sold, the alternative if the property is not purchased by Avalonia, and whether there was a minimum amount of time that would be dedicated to its stewardship. While in favor of conservation, he felt that a completed Management Plan would have been helpful.

Adam Heckle, 1171 Route 163, Oakdale, spoke in favor of the Resolution. Helping fund the purchase of the property would ensure that the 673-acre land would be maintained as open land for everyone to enjoy in perpetuity. Many modern world issues are due to the individual's separation from the natural world. Avalonia is a bi-partisan effort that views

all citizens as equal participants in life. Its mission is to preserve land and its natural resources. The Bond Property provides a natural habitat for rare and, possibly, endangered wildlife and sustains healthy breeding populations that positively impact the surrounding forest and properties. If approved, the property would never become developed, sold for capital gain, neglected, or ignored and decisions pertaining to the land would be assisted by the local committees through public decision-making processes. The request is a fairly common practice due to the lack of resources of non-profit organizations. He guaranteed that Avalonia would continue to upgrade, enhance, remediate, and restore the property, as necessary, through grant funding and fundraising efforts. While the tax increase is a huge upset and the land would not be directly owned by the Town, everyone would immensely benefit by providing individuals with a connection with the natural world that could never be broken or taken away.

John Guetens, 127 Cottonwood Lane, Uncasville, Chairperson, Conservation Commission, commended Avalonia Land Conservancy Representatives Conant and Kepple for articulating the many benefits of the Bond Property. He stated that, as a taxpayer, he, too, is sensitive to the budgetary issues and resulting tax increase of \$20.00 to \$25.00/year. Nevertheless, such opportunities that improve the community and have lasting value are rare and should be supported. He felt that it would be well worth the 10-year investment in the community's future in perpetuity.

Jessica LeClair, 1650 Bozrah Road, Oakdale, expressed her strong support for the bond. Echoing Mr. Guetens' comments, she stated that the property offers countless opportunities for the Town and its residents, including the protection of open space, preserve valuable wildlife habitats, protect drinking water, providing the public with a new place to recreate and explore, and show future generations they care about them and their access to nature. Such opportunities are rare and unparalleled. While the cost is not insignificant in its sum, it is the cost of a few cups of coffee per year per family and is a cost she is willing to pay for such a treasure to be preserved in our community in perpetuity. Such places as Yellowstone National Park, Acadia, Grand Canyon, and Yosemite make us proud to be American. The Bond Property could serve the same purpose and become a place where people can come together as a community to support, be proud of, and protect. Following the Town's one-time investment, its residents will reap its benefits forever at no additional cost, while the Avalonia Land Conservancy, a trusted partner in the region, will maintain and ensure that the property prospers. She hopes that the Town will take advantage of this opportunity and support the preservation of the property for the current and future residents of Montville.

Charles Bussher, 3 Brewer Street, Uncasville, spoke in opposition to the Resolution, citing Gardner Lake State Park, which is littered with trash, state police presence, and numerous No Parking signs. The Park invites people from out of town, many of whom drink, smoke "dope", and cannot swim. The Property, like Gardner Lake State Park, will strain the Town's resources for rescues and fires. He cited the size of the Environmental Impact Statement for the site that formerly housed a sand and gravel operation. Because a portion of the property is located within the New London Watershed, he questioned why the New London Water Authority has not been approached to help fund its purchase and questioned their ability to keep individuals from entering and bathing in the water.

Duncan O'Neill, 11 Cherry Lane, Oakdale, spoke in opposition to the Resolution, citing the lack of a Management Plan, the many items in the town's infrastructure in need of repair, the strain on the town's emergency services, and the lack of a guarantee that the property would not be sold by Avalonia in the future.

William Bucko, 106 Wildwood Lane, Uncasville, who has hiked many of Avalonia's trails, spoke in favor of the Resolution. The property would allow the families of tomorrow to

talk about and discover mother nature's offerings and continue to provide a habitat for wildlife, who continue to lose their natural habitats to developments. He questioned the cost increase to their tax assessments should the Resolution pass.

Angelo Callis, 486 Chapel Hill Road, Oakdale, was born and raised in Norwich and moved to Montville in 1991 to enjoy the trees, open spaces, and wildlife – connections that are essential for human life. He also recognized the importance of money and tax dollars, especially due to the uncertainties and insecurities of the day. He questioned whether it would cost more to have a housing development, possibly a low-income housing development, with additional families and children than to invest the funds today and ensure a natural and sustainable place for all.

Wills Pike, 71 Pheasant Run, Oakdale, relayed a story of an encounter with one of the residents regarding the town's affordability to purchase the Bond Property vs. the town's ability to fund the Board of Education and ensure his children would have a good education. Such questions, he felt, should be considered when the residents submit their vote at this week's Town Meeting.

Elaine Hess, 17 Birchwood Drive, Uncasville, Member, Conservation Commission, clarified that, if purchased, the Avalonia Nature Conservancy would not be able to sell the property. She spoke on her experience as she toured the property in a vehicle on well-established trails, making stops at vantage points comprised of meadows, ponds, streams, and forests. The acquisition will complement the education system as children would be invited to learn about the natural world, first-hand. Similarly, seniors will also have the opportunity to walk the trails. She felt this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and encouraged everyone to vote in favor of the Resolution, stating that the property needs to be protected and preserved in perpetuity and sending the message that Montville Cares about its environment, residents, and beyond.

Raymond Daniels, 87 Turner Road, Oakdale, spoke in opposition to the Resolution, stating that the town should take care of its residents first, citing the issues his mother, a long-time resident, is experiencing in finding an affordable home.

Ellen Abutin, 19 Hickory Drive, Oakdale, spoke in favor of the Resolution, stating that, having toured the property, she found the land to be very beautiful and expressed her wish for the residents to have been offered more opportunities to tour the property.

Chairman May asked three times if any additional members of the public would like to speak regarding the Resolution.

6. Remarks from the Councilors and the Mayor

Councilor Southard was pleased with the number of residents who attended this evening's Public Hearing and encouraged everyone to attend the Town Meeting and vote on the matter.

Councilor Yuchniuk stated that he has not been personally approached by a single individual in favor of the bond. A rough count of this evening's comments reveals that the residents are approximately even in their thoughts. He thanked everyone for attending this evening's Public Hearing and felt that the townspeople could not afford to fund the remaining \$1.5 million needed to bond the purchase at this time. The townspeople may take advantage of and enjoy the town's other areas and utilize the funds to improve upon their existing properties.

Councilor Sabilia felt that the property would provide an opportunity for the townspeople to be part of the worldwide conservation efforts at home. While the property comes at a cost, the beauty of the property and the ability to purchase the property without any ongoing maintenance costs is ideal. He, too, wished that more individuals were able to tour

the property. He encouraged everyone to attend this week's Town Meeting and vote.

Councilor Caron thanked everyone for attending this evening's Public Hearing and voicing their opinions.

Chairperson May estimated that the bonding of the purchase of the property would cost \$170,000.00/year for ten (10) years or \$15.00 to \$20.00 per person per year, based on the median assessed property value in Montville. He added that the majority of the land that has been designated as open space in the Town of Montville is dedicated to Eversource powerlines, pump stations, and the like, and very little, in comparison, is deemed as usable open space. Its funding should be viewed as an investment into its future rather than its immediate cost. He encouraged everyone to attend this week's Town Meeting and vote

7. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard, to close the Public Hearing and adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, 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**

### **BOND RESOLUTION**

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$1,500,000 FOR THE PRESERVATION OF BOND PROPERTY PROJECT AND THE FINANCING OF SAID APPROPRIATION BY THE ISSUANCE OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS OF THE TOWN AND NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCH BONDS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$1,500,000 THEREFOR

RESOLVED:

Section 1. That the sum of \$1,500,000 is appropriated by the Town of Montville, Connecticut (the “Town”) for a grant to the Avalonia Land Conservancy (“Avalonia”) pursuant to an agreement between the Town and Avalonia with respect to the purchase of the Bond Property consisting of approximately 673 acres located in the Town for the preservation of such property, and for interest on borrowings and other financing costs, and for administrative, printing, financing and legal and costs of issuance related thereto (the “Project”).

Section 2. That to finance said appropriation for the Project, the Town shall issue bonds, notes or other obligations in an amount not to exceed \$1,500,000. The bonds, notes or other obligations shall be issued pursuant to Chapter 109 of the Connecticut General Statutes, Revision of 1958, as amended (the “Connecticut General Statutes”), including, without limitation, Section 7-369 of the Connecticut General Statutes, and any other enabling acts.

Section 3. That the Town issue and renew temporary notes from time to time in anticipation of the receipt of the proceeds from the sale of the bonds, notes or other obligations for the Project or the receipt of grants for the Project. The amount of the notes outstanding at any time shall not exceed \$1,500,000. The notes shall be issued pursuant to Section 7-378 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Town shall comply with the provisions of Section 7-378a of the Connecticut General Statutes with respect to any notes that do not mature within the time permitted by said Section 7-378.

Section 4. That the Mayor and the Director of Finance of the Town (the “Officials”) be authorized to sign said bonds, notes or other obligations by their manual or facsimile signatures and to determine the amounts, rates of interest, dates, maturities, dates of principal and interest payments on such bonds, notes or other obligations, the form of such bonds, notes or other obligations; the provisions for protecting and enforcing the rights and remedies of the holders of such bonds, notes or other obligations and all other terms, conditions and particular matters regarding the issuance and securing of such bonds, notes or other obligations and to execute, sell and deliver the same and all other documents, agreements and certificates related to the sale, issuance or delivery of said bonds, notes or other obligations, and provide all supporting documentation as may be necessary or desirable to accomplish such purposes and to comply with the requirements of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, Securities and Exchange Commission Rule 15c2-12 (the “Rule”), and in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes and any other applicable provision of law thereto enabling. Pursuant to Section 7-370 of the Connecticut General Statutes, except as otherwise provided herein, the Officials are delegated authority to determine the terms, details and particulars of borrowings authorized by this resolution. The bonds and notes authorized hereby shall be general obligations of the Town secured by the full faith and credit of the Town.

Section 5. That the Officials are hereby authorized to designate a bank or trust company to be the certifying bank, registrar, transfer agent and paying agent for such bonds and notes; to provide for the keeping of a record of the bonds, notes or other obligations; to designate a financial advisor to the Town in connection with the sale of the bonds, notes or other obligations; to

designate the law firm of Pullman & Comley, LLC, Hartford, Connecticut, as the attorneys at law, to render an opinion approving the legality of such issue or issues.

Section 6. That the Officials are authorized to sell the bonds and notes by a competitive offering or by a negotiated sale, at public or private sale, at their discretion; to deliver the bonds, notes or other obligations; and to perform all other acts which are necessary or appropriate to issue the bonds, notes or other obligations, including, but not limited to, entering into a continuing disclosure agreement pursuant to the "Rule". If the bonds, notes or other obligations authorized by this resolution are issued on a tax-exempt basis, the Officials are authorized to bind the Town pursuant to such representations and covenants as they deem necessary or advisable in order to maintain the continued exemption from federal income taxation of interest on the bonds, notes or other obligations, including covenants to pay rebates of investment earnings to the United States in future years.

Section 7. That the Town hereby declares its official intent under Section 1.150-2 of the Federal Income Tax Regulations (the "Treasury Regulations") that project costs may be paid from temporary advances of available funds, which are paid within sixty days prior to and any time after the date of passage of this resolution, and that (except to the extent reimbursed from grant moneys) the Town reasonably expects to reimburse any such advances from the proceeds of borrowings (the "Obligations") in an aggregate principal amount not in excess of the amount of borrowing authorized above for the Project. Such Obligations shall be issued to reimburse such expenditures not later than eighteen months after the later of the date of the expenditure or the substantial completion of the Project, or such later date the Treasury Regulations may authorize. The Treasurer, or designee, is authorized to pay Project expenses in accordance herewith pending the issuance of reimbursement Obligations. The Officials are authorized to amend such declaration of official intent as they deem necessary or advisable and to bind the Town pursuant to such representations and covenants as they deem necessary or advisable in order to maintain the continued exemption from federal income taxation of interest on the bonds, notes or other obligations authorized by this resolution, if issued on a tax-exempt basis.

Section 8. That the Officials are hereby authorized, on behalf of the Town, to enter into agreements or otherwise covenant for the benefit of bondholders to provide information on an annual or other periodic basis to information repositories designated by the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board and to provide notices to such repositories of certain events as enumerated in the Rule, as may be necessary, appropriate or desirable to effect the sale of the bonds and notes authorized by this resolution. Any agreements or representations to provide information to such repositories made prior hereto are hereby confirmed, ratified and approved.

Section 9. It is hereby found and determined that it is in the public interest to issue all, or a portion of, the bonds, notes or other obligations of the Town authorized herein as qualified private activity bonds, or with interest that is includable in gross income of the holders thereof for purposes of federal income taxation. The Officials are hereby authorized to issue and utilize without further approval any financing alternative currently or hereafter available to municipal governments pursuant to law including but not limited to any "tax credit bond," "tax-advantaged bond," including direct payment and tax credit versions of such bonds.

Section 10. That the Officials and other proper officers of the Town are authorized to take all other actions which are necessary or desirable to complete the Project consistent with the foregoing and to issue bonds, notes or other obligations to finance the aforesaid appropriation.

Section 11. That this resolution shall become effective after approval at Town Meeting vote.