



Town of Montville – Route 32 Investment Plan Steering Committee Meeting No. 1

Wednesday, August 20, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
Montville Town Hall, Room 203

Meeting Minutes

Steering Committee Members in Attendance

Sara Lundy, Planning and Zoning Commission, Chairperson
Mayor Leonard Bunnell
Meredith Badalucca, Assistant Planner
Stacy Radford, ZEO/WEO
Ron McDaniel, WPCA
Chief Wilfred Blanchette, Montville Police
Meracus Hernandez, EDC
Eric Marsh, Oxoboxo Lofts
Chris Clark, Mohegan Tribal Utilities

Steering Committee Members Absent

Nick Sabilia, Town Council Liaison
Mario Infante, Rand Whitney
Dave Waddington, DW/CT Scrap & Yale's

Other

Steve Jacobs (BJH Advisors)
Laura Pirie (Pirie Associates, via Zoom)
Edward Lamson (BJH Advisors, via Zoom)
Arthur Samuel (BJH Advisors, via Zoom)
Jim Butler, Grant Manager

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mayor L. Bunnell welcomed those in attendance and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Overview of the Project

- S. Lundy and L. Bunnell provided a brief background and overview of the Route 32 Investment Plan project and introduced S. Jacobs and the BJH Advisors/Pirie Associates Team
- S. Jacobs provided some additional context and objectives of the project:
 - This is an actionable investment plan, including key catalytic projects, public realm improvements, land use strategies, and identification of potential funding mechanisms to improve the Route 32 and Route 163 corridors and strengthen Montville's housing and economic base.
 - S. Jacobs provided an overview of the Investment Plan's scope of work, which includes:
 - Data and market analysis
 - Community and stakeholder engagement
 - Analysis and identification of high-potential development sites and public realm improvements
 - Implementation-focused strategy development and final proposed plan/final report
- S. Jacobs noted the objectives of this Steering Committee meeting:
 - Build rapport
 - Confirm shared understanding of project scope, objectives and schedule
 - Gather the Steering Committee's input on priority issues, development constraints, and investment opportunities
 - ID key stakeholders and community groups for targeted engagement
- S. Jacobs reviewed project schedule:
 - 11-month schedule (July 2025 – May 2026) - note that there may be opportunities to accelerate schedule in the spring
 - Currently working on Task 1 (Data and Market Analysis), which will be completed in mid-Sept.
 - First Community Engagement Session will be in October. The second Community Engagement Session will be in January and the third session will be in April.
 - There will be three full Steering Committee meetings, including this one, in addition to one in early January and one in early April; BJH Advisors has proposed a special virtual Steering Committee meeting in late September to prepare for the first Community Engagement Session. Note that the Steering Committee will be an important resource for effective community and stakeholder engagement.
 - There will be a final presentation to the Steering Committee, Town Council, and Planning & Zoning Commission in late May/early June 2026.

- The BJH Advisors Team has monthly coordination meetings with the Town of Montville client team and provides a monthly status report.

3. **Review of Study Areas**

- S. Jacobs presented the Route 32 and Route 163 corridor project area boundaries
 - The Committee was fine with the boundaries of the Route 32 corridor project area; there was discussion that the Route 163 corridor project area boundaries should be extended eastward to Route 32. S. Jacobs noted that they now are and the two project areas border each other along Route 163 at I-395.
- S. Jacobs presented a map of the broader market study area, which includes all towns that border Montville in addition to New London and Groton.

4. **Community Engagement Strategy**

- L. Pirie presented an overview of the team’s community engagement strategy, which will include three community engagement sessions focused on (1) discovery and vision; (2) identify and prioritize development/public realm improvement opportunities; (3) present final recommendations.
- L. Pirie reiterated that the Steering Committee will be an integral resource for identifying stakeholders and community members for targeted engagement
- E. Lamson discussed the project website that BJH will be setting up as a resource for community engagement. The website will also have translation features. BJH will work with Town of Montville and website should be up by early to mid-September.

5. **Preliminary Discussion of Investment Opportunities and Challenges**

Items discussed:

- S. Jacobs shared the Housing and Jobs Investment Areas from the 2022 Montville Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and asked if this should still be used as a framework. S. Lundy noted that this map was based on zoning, water, and sewer and that the Town is not wed to these uses as shown on the POCD map.
- Route 32
 - Some parcels on the west side are slated for development
 - Challenge – so many parcels have an existing land use on it, so it is hard to plan for development
 - Current zoning regulations allow for mixed-use; The Route 32 corridor comprises much of the Overlay Zone (the OZ);

- S. Lundy noted that the general consensus is that mixed use is probably the best use for the corridor. Most realistic path forward.
- Don't get a lot of mixed-use buildings, just a combination of both residential and commercial on a block.
- Village/Town center – Montville has no village or town center; for this to happen, traffic calming measures would need to be taken. Adding benches would help with pedestrian-friendly nodes. Bike lanes and sidewalks will help.
- R. McDaniel noted that the existing apartment building at the corner of Routes 163 and 32 presents an obstacle
- Note that there are a number of projects in the development pipeline that need to be considered, including 200 new units planned to the west of Route 32
- S. Jacobs and L. Pirie discussed different existing nodes of activity along Route 32 corridor and the different characters of the area to the north near the Route 2A (hotels, adjacency to Mohegan Sun) and to the south around the 163/32 junction and Town Hall.
- Route 163 Corridor
 - Big challenge for this corridor is topography and wetlands, in addition to the obstacle presented by the scrapyard. Would have to go around it
 - Corridor could lend itself to higher density residential development
- General Issues
 - Open to thinking more strategically about zoning in the area
 - S. Lundy and M. Badalucca noted that if we go for a zoning change, the principal criteria are that the change has to reflect the POCD's Future Land Use Map, though the land use map can be changed
 - Also note that water and sewer are controlled by other entities, not just the Town of Montville.
 - M. Badalucca will get water and sewer map to consultant team
 - Montville doesn't have a town center
 - Montville doesn't have a recreational center for young people
 - Had a drive-in movie theater, but not coming back b/c the new owner is converting the property to another use (truck sale/auction). Could use a bowling alley or movie theater
 - Crystal Mall in Waterford is struggling, and that is where younger people used to go to hang out.
 - Younger people have gone to Norwich to hang out.

- There is not a café for people to go to for coffee at 6 p.m.
- Mayor Bunnell reiterated that we need a way to attract developers and people to live within Montville.
 - Bring a park and river walks.
 - Have an opportunity to add a town green in front of Town Hall
 - People are attracted to the town's investment, which can make them stay within the community (bike lanes, places for pedestrians to sit)
 - L. Pirie noted that the Oxoboxo Brook can serve as a connector from the 163 corridor to the Thames River, with bike and pedestrian walkways
 - Bike and pedestrian walkways can serve as connector along Route 32 corridor as well
- Discussion about differing levels of population density in Montville; western Montville is not very dense. BJH will identify a density map
- Businesses that fail in Montville fail because of the lack of people, if more people, businesses would survive.
- The Mohegan Sun does not serve as a magnet for attracting people to the rest of Montville - visitors get off the Mohegan Sun's exit on 2A and stay on the property without leaving and patronizing Montville businesses.
- Mohegan Sun does not have a lot of food options after late hours; it only has two 24-hour restaurants. This could be an opportunity for the Route 32 corridor to fill.
- Montville does have a new boat launch that could help with the attraction of more people. (note that the boat launch is on property privately owned with a long-term lease)

6. Next Steps and Project Coordination

- S. Jacobs reviewed next steps:
 - Project website will be up in early September
 - Data collection and market analysis will be completed in mid-September
 - Preparation will begin for Community Engagement Session No. 1 and project leadership will be in touch with the Steering Committee about a special meeting in advance of the session, likely in late September

The meeting ended at 7:30 p.m.