

Town of Montville
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.
Room 203- Town Hall
310 Norwich-New London Turnpike, Uncasville, CT 06382

Comments will only be accepted at times designated for public comment by the Chairperson of the meeting. The Montville Town Council Rules of Procedure, decorum, timeliness, and suitability shall be followed and enforced.

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Gillette called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. Roll Call

Present were Chairperson Gillette, Vice-Chair Meracus Hernandez and Commissioners Walter Hewitt and Rich Kohlbrecher. Commissioners Sierra Davis and Sheelagh Lapinski were absent. A quorum was present.

Land Use and Development Director Dennis Goderre, Mayor Lenny Bunnell and Town Council Liaison Rachael Novak were also in attendance.

4. Alterations to the Agenda -- None

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a) December 15, 2025

Motion by Commissioner Hewitt; seconded by Commissioner Kohlbrecher to approve the EDC Regular Meeting Minutes of December 15, 2025. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor. Motion approved.**

6. Remarks from the Public (3-Minute Limit)

Chairperson Gillette asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

7. seCTer Presentation

a) EDC Roles and Community Collaboration

Referring to conversation at the last meeting, Director Goderre spoke of discussion had about Commission roles and responsibilities noting that it does not have authority but it does have strong emphasis. He also commented on pending Town projects—the proposed recreational trail from Route 32 to Route 163, the start of conservation and development and a positive call with housing to develop a plan for a \$125,000 grant.

Paul Whitescarver, Executive Director of seCTer, was introduced and gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled “What is Economic Development.” He referenced his work at seCTer that began in 2021 after having spent 39 years in military service and having obtained a bachelor’s degree in Economic Development. Mr. Whitescarver spoke on setting up a toolbox

that the Commission can use and referred to the U.S. Economic Development Administration, a government agency that fosters national economic development and competitiveness, helping communities build foundations for long-term job growth. He also remarked on implementing research for economic candidates and recommended actions to improve economy. CT General Statute §7-136 identifies the duties of an Economic Development Commission that the Commission was encouraged to review. The seCTer presentation then referenced the following topics:

- Placer EI can check and/or find businesses and other events
- seCTer receives funding from all Connecticut Towns; there are three (3) Chambers of Commerce—Eastern, Norwich and Mystic
- Advertising and preparation of promotional materials
- Submit an annual report to legislative body
- Manage appropriations and requests up to 1/20th of 1% of a Grand List
- Montville Business Trends 2020 – 2025 – data on new businesses inclusive of Montville and Oakdale. The data was obtained from the CT Secretary of State website and included new businesses; the percent of them that are still active; the business formation summary; the average lifespan of businesses closed; and a survival summary--an emphasis was noted that most close with the first two (2) years of operation; top industries according to NAICS—North American Industry Classification System and ownership of new businesses. From 2020 – 2025, the Town had 60% service-based businesses that were mostly women-owned. As to ownership survival rates, women do well at 67.6% and minorities at 72.7%. The data also identified business formations by location, veteran status and the disabled.

Director Whitescarver explained what seCTer does as the designated economic development organization in the region. Business formations by location in southeastern Connecticut encompasses 50% of the services it provides to the identified businesses mentioned in addition to Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). Other services it provides are assistance with applications for federal grants and a comprehensive strategy for businesses that involve federal government contracting. Upcoming events and workshops include education for economic development commissions, economic development gardening and access to capital for small businesses. The seCTer business services includes business advising and has a grant program that offers \$10,000 and \$25,000 grants. It also has a loan program at a rate of 4.5% over a period of 6 or 7 years depending upon the size of the loans that are maximized at \$500,000 for services locally such as Porch—a hunger relief program.

Per a response to a Director Goderre concerning outreach to civilians, Director Whitescarver reported that outsourcing is done through the Chambers of Commerce for a total loan value of \$40,000. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds from the federal government are nontraditional loans and seCTer fills the gap that banks cannot do. An aim for the organization is to offer/provide a business and technical advice grant. It was noted by Mayor Bunnell that the Town has three (3) seCTerRise grants totaling \$40,000. These grant requests according to Director Whitescarver are reviewed by the seCTer Board members. The outcomes of this grant will impact employment, hiring and workforce support creating business

outgrowth. Salvage security is another business in which funds should be used. The Director reported that seCTer hosts Connecticut Apex Accelerators regarding the contract bid process with Electric Boat in southeast Connecticut for those who are interested.

Director Whitescarver responded to questions of the Commission . Mayor Bunnell remarked that the presentation was informative and apologized for his failure to recognize him from the SECCOG (Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments) meeting. The Director noted that information regarding the seCTer programs are distributed for both the grants and the loans so businesses can accomplish what they want to do. Requests for CT Apex funds that has its own website are approved by the Director. The Mayor asked if data from year to year could be supplied if the Town had an annual road race; the Director confirmed that data can be provided on progression from year to year. It can be done by cell phone for those who use it and it must be requested for use. The Mayor thereafter asked if the data can be obtained for the Farmers Market if provided a calendar of its dates; the Director responded that data can pulled in different ways as well as information on struggling businesses as far back as 2017. Questions were asked from the Commission as to attracting businesses to the community and determining where people are visiting—this information can be obtained from the Town Clerk according to Mayor Bunnell.

seCTer can partnership for events concerning economic development to see where it can assist according to the Director who also spoke of the availability, affordability, and the lack child care. He spoke about the creation of a child care collaborative to build child care for families and a women’s development network partnering with Electric Boat and the United Way. Per a question by Town Councilor Novak concerning the top three (3) prioritized active roles for the EDC, Director Whitescarver responded with 1) housing that has a huge shortage in every price point; 2) the aspect of marketing via social media that is tough, but the Chambers of Commerce can help and seCTer can assist with foot traffic as to where people are traveling on and off the highway; and 3) identify businesses and visit them. It was remarked that the EDC visited businesses a few years ago and it can be done again. The data for businesses and their rate of failure can be obtained from seCTer, and it can define the risks of business in the first three (3) years. According to the Director, businesses that do not do well do not know how to run them and stated he would like to be able to provide online QuickBooks but seCTer does not offer it. He also referenced a failed business with a loss of \$600,000. He added that the capacity to data is a problem for economic development. The Commission receives a report of new Town businesses every month.

Commissioner Hewett reported on the last EDC event whereby a list of businesses was obtained from the Town Assessor, and invites were generated via email, etc. Information can also be obtained from the State. The last list of Town businesses was obtained in 2017-2018 according to Chairperson Gillette and the creation of authenticated data is needed according to Commissioner Hewitt. Director Goderre suggested having a quarterly invite with coffee to discuss business. Director Whitescarver reported that he is the Chairperson of the Board of Directors for the Connecticut Port Authority that has a small harbor improvement program that is grant based. A Town that has waterfront can request ship funds or a private entity can for grants up to \$250,000 for a Town marina space, for example. seCTer also has done structure

development grants. Mayor Bunnell remarked about the Town waterfront but noted there is no waterway developed as a marina in Town. He added that the issue is two-sided as it involves DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) and is leased to a brown field development LLC according to Commissioner Hewitt. The Mayor added that the Town pier is concrete and has all utilities. Director Whitescarver suggested that conversation be had with the development company as to what it can do there. For example, a storage place for material for Electric Boat.

The presentation concluded and Mayor Bunnell asked that follow-up by the Commission be directed to Director Goderre. Director Whitescarver concluded that the underuse of waterfront property exists where a lot of opportunity exists.

8. Standing Business

a) Report from Town Council Liaison – No report

b) EDC Commission Communications -- None

c) New Business Report

Chairperson Gillette noted that one (1) new business opened in January 2026 as cited on the monthly report—a hair boutique/independent contractor that is renting a chair for cosmetology appointments.

d) Project Updates

Director Goderre reported that projects are entering the final stage of one-quarter of a project. A Steering Committee meeting will be held in February followed by a public meeting in early or mid-March on which the Commission Vice-Chair is a participant. Visions concerning the three (3) staff comments will be identified and the final step is a joint meeting of the Town Council with the Planning & Zoning Commission in April. The aim is to keep the momentum going to obtain a housing grant for which the results are expected in 1-2 weeks. There will be a need to put new zoning regulations in place to provide flexibility as they currently lack clarity and use protocol. Current Town regulations are vague and open to interpretation as to what is allowed. Results are pending for the information concerning the CIF Grant Round 8 that involves the recreational trail plan and improvements for the Town Hall. A decision will not be heard until March or April.

9. Mission Statement/Purpose

As discussed at last month's Commission meeting, Director Goderre spoke about an EDC Mission Statement and/or Purpose and whether anyone had ideas or thoughts about them. He reported that he and Mayor Bunnell met with IT Director O'Neill about the Town website and use of the EDC page as a tool of communication for promotion and marketing. The Commission was asked to work on this matter and provide feedback to Director Goderre who will forward it on to IT. The Director will follow-up with IT about the service for mailing lists and look at resources such as Mail Chimp for business and other tasks. A suggestion was made by the Mayor for use of Uncasville Dinner for an EDC meet-and-greet as the location is

currently used for Rotary Club meetings. Also, once the design and cleanup of the EDC website is completed a link can be provided for quick access on the Town App. Commissioner Hewitt described the Town website as a static approach but there are many ways it can be used. Web information is obtained in many ways; a more vibrant, active resource to generate traffic to the Town for events and information is needed. Although there is no current means for social media for Town Boards and Commissions, questioned by Vice-Chair Hernandez, Commissioner Hewitt commented on prior short time use of Facebook by the Commission where communications from seCTer were posted. He also commented on pushback and negative commentary directed toward the Commission. Commissioner Hewitt did note that approval for posting to the site was in place at that time. Director Goderre will reach out to Julie, the assistant in his office, to touch base with the Assessor office. Commissioner Hewitt reported on having reviewed his archived EDC data and found EDC Special Minutes from February 2016 that indicated discussion of mission objectives, a communications plan and a letter to Town businesses. No exploration of the Groton website has been done per a question by Town Councilor Novak. Director Goderre reported that according to Mayor Bunnell and IT Director O'Neill, work will begin on the EDC webpage first. The cost for this work is unknown at this time with the key being to get grassroots support. Outreach would be the best use of time as it relates to marketing and image of the Town and thereafter look at the webpage work next year that would need to be budgeted. Commissioner Kohlbrecher reported about the use of influencers for Connecticut tourism.

10. Website Follow-up

This item was previously discussed under Agenda Item 9.

11. Business Outreach

This item was previously discussed under Agenda Item ____.

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

Chairperson Gillette asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

13. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Kohlbrecher, seconded by Vice-Chair Hernandez to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 4-0-0; all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

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