

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Parks & Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting – February 18, 2026 -- 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 6:38 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. Roll Call.

Present were Chairperson Rocky Stone, Vice-Chair William Barlow and Commissioners Mary Hillman, John Plikus, and Morgan Matthewson. Commissioners Noah Carver, Jon Chase and Deborah Schober were absent. A quorum was present.

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

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. There were none.

6. Presentation from the Garden Club relating to plantings at the Tennis/Pickleball court area.

a. Discussion and Motion on presentation

Chairperson Stone reported that Recreation Director Bushway had requested that this presentation come before the Commission. Town residents, Adam Heckle and Catherine Hinojosa, are also members of the Conservation Commission as well as Garden Club members. Their presentation reported on their consistent garden work in Town that began at the end of 2023 into 2024 and helping Ellen DeGeneres at the Town Hall. Their work includes enhancement at the Town Hall; the Conservation Center entrance; the Bellows Garden in front of Fair Oaks this year that will be turned over to the family; the Uncasville sign at Mohegan Sun that will include more plantings that was started last spring and Lawton Trail through the Conservation Commission. Other projects include a garden at Desjardins Park and clearing a working garden for the Girl Scouts. Their purpose is to consistently help and do more projects each year and with existing gardening ones to let the community know they are willing to help. A. Heckle contacted Town Councilor Southard about beautifying the pickleball court screen area and shrubs and trees near the bathrooms

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to open the area for planting from work issued by Public Works. Their work includes maintenance such as mulching and watering garden areas that are coordinated with Public Works. Some funding will be requested that should be coordinated through Public Works, according to Chairperson Stone. The residents have worked with Public Works Director Carlson extensively who loves the mulch they placed around the trees that makes the life of Public Works easier. Town Councilor Southard remarked on a motion of support from the Commission to Public Works whereby a garden description with details can be done acknowledging the work of the Garden Club and areas they think needs work. **Motion** by Chairperson Stone; seconded by Commissioner Matthewson to support the effort of the Garden Club to work with Public Works to beautify park areas in Town. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 5-0-0, all in favor. Motion approved.**

7. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve:

a. The Amended Meeting Minutes of January 21, 2026.

Motion by Commissioner Matthewson; seconded by Commissioner Hillman to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 21, 2026, as amended. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 5-0-0, all in favor. Motion approved.**

8. Recreation Director’s Report February 2026.

Recreation Director Bushway reviewed his February 2026 monthly report as follows:

- The last few days of youth basketball concludes on February 20th weather dependent. Saturday is the last clinic for 1st and 2nd grades. Two (2) makeup sessions is required as the Murphy School gym is leaking and a location is being sought.
- Unified Night at the New London Community Center that is sponsoring the event has been rescheduled to March 14th and the ad for it will be redone and sent. The event brings together area Parks & Recreation Departments for promotion. The time is from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Chairperson Stone suggested putting a banner at the top of the Department webpage; Mayor Bunnell remarked that questions should be sent to IT Director O’Neill, per a question by Vice-Chairperson Barlow. Commissioner Matthewson inquired about having Department tennis lessons. Town Council Southard suggested contacting George Crouse.
- The bid opening for the Fair Oaks bathroom restoration are being reviewed by Finance and a search for funds to complete the project that has been on the books for 12 years. Mayor Bunnell reported that funds are secured for completion of the entire project.
- The Masons are all set for the Egg Hunts. Donations will be sought for the Flashlight Hunt.
- There are signups for the Monday/Wednesday crochet program but none for Tuesday/Thursday classes. An adult class may be offered.

9. Report from Finance.

Recreation Director Bushway reported that Department finances are fine with no irregularities. Chairperson Stone inquired, if it is possible, to see cost analysis of income and instructor payment for one (1) year for one (1) program. The Director will work with Patrick in Finance on the same.

10. March Newsletter.

Town Councilor Southard reported a change to Recreation Director Bushway about the Farmers Market. The cost for a vendor full-season member is \$100. She also questioned why there was not

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a graphic, full-page advert that is needed for the Unified Night event. Recreation Director Bushway responded to a question about the Egg Hunts from Commissioner Matthewson and all changes will be made before the newsletter is sent out. Chairperson Stone asked why events were not included in the weekly Times booklet; Recreation Director Bushway noted that administration at *The Day* are not in favor of the booklet or its continuance.

11. Unfinished Business.

a. Projects and funding status:

Chairperson Stone inquired about updates on the following projects.

- 1) Pickleball Parking Improvements (\$175,000 State Bond)

Recreation Director Bushway reported that Public Works Director Carlson has chosen a screen

- 2) Large Pavilion Phase 1 Parking Improvements (\$200,000 State Bond)

State Bond is pending on this item.

- 3) Pickleball Camera Project (\$26,250 CIP Budget)

Recreation Director Bushway reported that there are no updates on the camera, but a pole is being sought for the camera to run an electrical conduit to it. Funds for these items will be expended from the IT budget with work in progress on it.

- 4) Pickleball privacy screen (up to \$2,500 from Fund 079)

Recreation Director Bushway reported in Agenda Item 11.a.1 on this matter.

- 5) Camp Oakdale Maintenance Building

Recreation Director Bushway spoke with Public Works Director Carlson concerning the maintenance building and electricity to it as there is no funding for it. A request to the Commission for \$5,000 was asked for its completion. Chairperson Stone reported that he was at a Public Works meeting two (2) months ago when the topic came up and had asked the Public Works Director for a quote to present to the Commission. He remarked on the time wasted and that he would try to attend the Public Works meeting next week.

b) Carnival Committee

In the absence of Commissioner Schober, Town Councilor Southard reported on food trucks for the event—some have responded “yes” and others have not responded as of yet. Near the location of the face painter, there will be a woman who works with kids to make pens with beads and key tags. There will also be a build-a-bear table for kids and work is being done with Sheffield Farms, but phone tag is the issue at present. The bracelet price has been confirmed at \$35 and the Saturday hours for the event are 3:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. Recreation Director Bushway has not solidified the price for the rock wall—he has one person to contact that has started its own company about the \$3,000 per day cost, a 5-hour time slot.

12. New Business

a. 2025-2026 Budget/CIP Review

Referring to the CIP 2026-2030, Chairperson Stone reported that the Department CIP Plan for FY2025-2026 was pushed into FY2026-2027. With the exception of Item #10, the Community Center, Recreation Director Bushway reported that all the remaining CIP items were requested by him. The Chairperson noted that the request for the Community Center was made in June 2024. He also noted that the Director does a good job with the regular budget proposal stating the Department programs are not run for profit. Director Bushway reported that the summer program was designed to lose money noting that the loss was initially \$37,000 but is now \$12,000 --

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\$16,000 to the Town. The existing summer program hours are 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., five (5) days per week at a cost of \$75 per week. The program accommodates 200-plus children and part-timers per week. Expenses for the program increased by \$3,406 but raising the cost per week to \$80 or \$85 will bring in \$8,200 more than last year. Social Services determines who are eligible for aid, a loss of \$4,000 - \$5,000. The Commission must decide how economical to the make the cost for the program understanding that increasing the weekly cost will equate to losing participants. Chairperson Stone noted that \$75/week is a bargain for eight (8) hours a day; the cost per week only increases by \$1 per day noted Commissioner Plikus. Instead of requesting the full cost of the program upfront, Commissioner Matthewson suggested modifying payment on a weekly or biweekly basis to coordinate with parents' paycheck cycle. She added that this modification would benefit families with multiple children as the hardship for a lump sum payment can be embarrassing given the economy. Vice-Chairperson Barlow suggested that those terms are included in the program application with an option for a free trip if the entire cost is paid upfront. Commissioner Plikus questioned if there would be additional administrative costs associated with the suggestion; Commissioner Matthewson suggested a discount for payment upfront and a free trip. Chairperson Stone remarked that Recreation Director Bushway can work with the families and contact them on the proposal as some costs are increasing including some of the Town budget items. **Motion** by Chairperson Stone; seconded by Vice-Chairperson Barlow to increase the cost for the Summer Camp Program to \$80 per week/per person, effective this year. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 5-0-0, all in favor. Motion approved.**

13. Communications. -- None

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

Chairperson Stone asked three (3) times for remarks. Mayor Bunnell remarked on the comment made earlier regarding the FY2026-2027 budget. The preliminary budget presented to the Department is only a proposal and any increases are not known at this time. He will also meet with Recreation Director Bushway and IT concerning the Department webpage regarding the banner discussed earlier and to weed out old information. As to the shed at Camp Oakdale, Public Works Director Carlson made a good faith effort about the cost for electrical installation to the shed, but it did not work. Thereafter, the Director was told to get a quote and give it to the Recreation Director to bring to the Commission with a real number, not an estimate. The Mayor also reported that the Building Committee was established in 2024 and since created the only person on the committee is Town Councilor Southard. He has since created an ordinance to send to TARP to establish a permanent Building Committee that will supersede the current committee. The newly proposed committee will be responsible for all Town and Board of Education projects. Once the ordinance is passed, there will be a Public Hearing prior. The permanent Building Committee will supersede the existing Community Center Building Committee. It is the understanding of the Mayor that the previous committee advocated for a new community center, but he had suggested at that time for an addition to the existing structure for the needs of the Community Center itself. Mayor Bunnell remarked that once he receives the quote for the shed he will forward it to Recreation Director Bushway so we will have solid cost information.

15. Remarks from Town Council Liaison Southard.

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Town Councilor Southard reported that she will speak to Public Works with the beautification crew. She also noted that a TARP meeting has not been held concerning the Community Center and Parks & Recreation revised rental agreement. A meeting is scheduled for next week and she will make sure this item is on the agenda.

16. Remarks from Parks & Recreation Director Bushway

Recreation Director Bushway asked Town Councilor Southard to let him know about the date of the TARP meeting. The Town Councilor asked that he provide her with a clean version of the revised rental agreement for presentation at the meeting.

17. Remarks from Commissioners.

Commissioner Matthewson wished everyone a good weekend after having been advised of the change in the upcoming forecast.

18. Adjournment.

Motion by Vice-Chairperson Barlow; seconded by Commissioner Plikus to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 5-0-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted by,

Gloria J. Gathers
Town of Montville
Recording Secretary

**AN AUDIO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE ON
THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WEBSITE UNDER THE “RESOURCES” TAB.**