

TOWN OF MONTVILLE -- PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
Special Meeting – March 23, 2026 -- 6:00 PM
Town Council Chambers – Montville Town Hall

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 Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. Roll Call.

Present were Chairperson Gary Murphy, Vice-Chair Steven Stewart and Commissioners Tracy Callaghan, Mickey Gillette, Steve Lougee and Karen Perkins. Absent was Commissioner William Bauer. A quorum was present. *The absence of the Recording Secretary was noted but her arrival is expected.*

4. Special Recognitions and Presentations.

**Pinning Ceremony: Deputy Fire Marshal Travis Roberts
Firefighter Collin Delmastro**

Fire Marshal Meigel introduced new Town employees Deputy Fire Marshal Travis Roberts and Firefighter Collin Delmastro. Deputy Fire Marshal Roberts was described as a former, active duty Army (35Mike) Human Intelligence Collector/Interrogator that served from 2010 to 2014 and the Army Reserves until 2017. He immediately joined the fire service upon returning home and earned his bachelor's degree and multiple certifications—EMT, Firefighter II, and Hazardous Material Technician. In 2018, he became a paramedic and later obtained his critical care certification. In 2021, the Deputy Marshal was inspired to pursue fire prevention and investigation after responding to a serious structure fire involving a young child. In 2023, he earned his Fire Marshal certification, in addition to Fire Instructor II and Fire Officer II certifications. Thereafter, he assisted in modernizing and completely overhauling the Fire Marshal Office of the Town of Salem and now proudly serves the Town of Montville.

Firefighter Collin Delmastro started his fire prevention experience in Oakdale at 14 years old. He is a third generation firefighter who is currently a lieutenant in the North Windom Fire Department. He has also completed recruit school at the Connecticut Fire Academy. Firefighter Delmastro plays sports and loves lifting weights when not engaged in firefighter duties.

Town Clerk Katie Haring swore in the new employees--Deputy Fire Marshal Roberts whose badge was pinned by his wife Christie and Firefighter Delmastro who was pinned by Chief Delmastro. *The meeting was recessed briefly for picture taking at 6:08 p.m. and resumed open session at 6:14 p.m. It was also reported that the Recording Secretary was now present.*

5. Communications:

Copies of monthly statistics reports from Fire Departments, Fire Marshal, Police Department, Animal Control and Building Official.

Chairperson Murphy reported that all of the statistical reports for the month ending February 28, 2026 were received from each department with the exception of the report from Montville Fire Company noted by Vice-Chair Stewart. The Chairperson reported that he would discuss the report with Fire Chief Turner.

6. To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve minutes:

a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of October 27, 2025.

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Callaghan to approve the Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of October 27, 2025. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. Motion approved.**

b. The Special Meeting Minutes of December 8, 2025.

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the Commission Special Minutes of December 8, 2025. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. Motion approved.**

7. Remarks from the Public. (Agenda items only).

Chairperson Murphy asked three (3) times for remarks. Mike Moran of 117 Seabury Road, Lebanon, CT, a Town paid firefighter, referenced Agenda Item 11.a that he noted has been on the agenda since November 2023. He understands that the matter is about baseline data reporting concerning paid staff, volunteer staff and the types of calls. He remarked that staffing needs to be addressed as the work is getting busier due to increased call volume; that the Union has been collecting data; and M2 has requested additional help. M. Moran also reported having commented on this item at the recent Town Council meeting and in a follow-up email sent on the same noting action is needed as well as a request for a meeting with the parties to follow-up and take action on this item.

8. Remarks from Department Heads.

Police Department Report

Lt. Radford read into the record the Animal Control reports for the month ending February 2026. This data can be found under Agenda Item 10.b. The Lieutenant reported that the Animal Control Facility is in its final stages of checklist items that include completing the installation of animal cages and the guillotine doors for inside and out and other touchups for the State

Animal Control Inspection, that hopefully will occur within the next two (2) weeks. The Lieutenant also thanked the Montville Animal Welfare Initiative Inc. for all they have done that includes procuring a pet washer and dryer with pedestals, a pet bathtub, a desk and reported that they will be obtaining a refrigerator as well. He also thanked the Initiative for helping to obtain the new building sign that was donated by Dime Bank. The Bank also made a \$2,500 donation toward the K-9 program. The Lieutenant then read positive correspondence concerning police officers as follows:

During the evening shift on February 4, 2026, the Montville Fire Department responded to a robbery that involved firearm use. Detective Saffioti and Detective Noyes were called in to assist at the scene given the severity of the crimes. They processed the scene and secured evidence for investigation. On February 5 2026, the two (2) detectives in addition to Officer Fazzino who was assigned to cover patrol gathered evidence that lead to identification of the prime suspect. The suspect was interviewed at the suspect's residence conducted by Detective Saffioti and Officer Fazzino that was done with professionalism, respect and dignity toward the suspect. The suspect later provided a full written confession that satisfied robberies committed in Montville, Norwich and Waterford. On the scene, Detective Noyes assisted with securing and collecting evidence that linked the suspect to multiple robberies. All three (3) of these individuals should be commended for responding, investigating, processing, continuing and solving this investigation.

A letter of February 5, 2026 to Police Chief Blanchette was received from Inspector Matthew Suplee of the State of Connecticut, Office of the State's Attorney in appreciation of the "exceptional work" in the successful prosecution of Atlantikh Balidemaj for murder by Officer Witts. Officer Witts along with other officers made the time to come to the State's Attorney Office during the hearing and trial process to discuss testimony for the Defendant Balidemaj case that involved two (2) pretrial motion hearings—June 16 to June 17, 2025 and November 4, 5, 12, and 25 2025. Thereafter, a three-week trial was held between January 6, 2026 and January 23, 2026. The pivotal role of Officer Witts in the investigation and prosecution of the case was acknowledged in addition to his actions on the scene on November 5, 2022 along with his knowledge of K-9 operations that provided much needed information and detail to the case prosecution. Officer Witts was recognized for his time spent and effort to prepare and assist with the successful prosecution of the case as well as his principles of justice and maintaining the integrity of the legal process that was deemed commendable. Inspector Suplee noted that he looked forward to working with Officer Witts in the future.

On December 12, 2025, Officer Osunniyi was patrolling in the area of Fire Street when he observed an active fire in a wooded area 75 yards from the roadway. The Officer immediately notified Dispatch and requested fire services to the scene. Officer Osunniyi assisted by Officer Cassidy conducted an investigation. Officer Cassidy had information from having worked the previous shift that three (3) juveniles were known

to be in the area and could have caused the fire. Montville Fire Personnel arrived, took over the scene and extinguished the fire quickly. The Officers interviewed the involved parties and made a subsequent speedy arrest. Had Officer Osunniyi not been conducting a patrol of the remote area of Town, the fire could have become more substantial and caused significant damage. Officer Osunniyi should be recognized for his dedication to his profession as he is a credit to himself and the Montville Police Department,

On January 21, 2026, a letter was received from Sgt. Sean Mahar, a recruit coordinator with the Connecticut State Police Training Academy in sincere appreciation for Investigator Steven Fazzino who took the time to teach recruits Gangs (POST 624) at the 138th Training Troop. Officer Fazzino was described as being “professional, extremely informative and highly engaging” and the material he presented as being interesting, relevant and a great foundation for the future of Connecticut law enforcement. Officer Fazzino’s efforts and the collaboration with the MPD was truly appreciated. Sgt. Mahar hopes to continue to foster the relationship so that recruits can benefit from Officer Fazzino in the future. The Sergeant asked that extreme gratitude is extended to Officer Fazzino for his time and effort spent with the recruits.

Fire Marshal Report

Fire Marshal Meigel read into the record the Fire Marshal Office statistics for the month ending February 2026, as follows: *(This Fire Marshal Report was reported first under this Agenda line item.)*

Fire Marshal’s Office Activities	February 2026
Inspections of Businesses and Apartments	77
Reinspection of Businesses and Apartments *	65
Fire Investigations	5
Incident Responses Q64 (Deputy Fire Marshal)—1 Medical	1
Community Events	0
Emergency Management Incident	1
Emergency Management Obligations	20 hours
Burn Permits Issued	0

**The number of reinspections was verbally corrected by the Fire Marshal from the written report calculation of 58 to 65 for a total of 142 for monthly inspections and reinspections. Additional information was reported by the Fire Marshal Meigel that the EMP Grant period has just opened, and work will start on it; the Nuclear Millstone Grant was completed on February 22nd and is pending approval; the Millstone tabletop exercise and briefing with the EOC was done on February 20th; and two (2) additional fulltime firefighters were assigned at*

the Chesterville, Mohegan, and Oakdale Fire Companies, (none were requested by Montville Company) for storm preparation on March 21st – March 24th. Lastly, the Fire Marshal reported that there were three (3) firefighters who successfully passed Fire Instructor 1 certification training—Josh Braga, Mitch Doyle and Noah Dombrowski—as questioned by Chairperson Murphy. Vice-Chair Stewart asked what town the animal that came in from Colchester was sold, that status is unknown, and about the portable generator still in use that will remain in place until the new one arrives in a couple of months.

9. Committee and Liaison Reports:

a. Report from Fire Department Liaison. (Perkins)

Commissioner Perkins read into the record Montville Fire Activity statistics for February 2026, as follows:

Montville Fire Activity—February 2026		
Total Calls:	266	
Fire Calls:	52	4 -- assists out of town fire
Ambulance Calls:	214	4 -- assists out of town ambulance
Lift Assists for Ambulance Calls:	20	

Volunteer Firefighters Relief Committee (4th Quarter 2025)

	October – December	
Fire Companies	Stipends	Tax Abatements
Montville		3
Mohegan	4	0
Chesterfield	1	3
Oakdale	7	7

The 2026 schedule of meetings for the Volunteer Firefighters Relief Committee are April 27th, July 27th, October 26th and January 27th 2027.

Montville Fire Company (February 2026)—No Report

Incidents:	Total
Canceled Calls--	
EMS Calls --	
Fire Calls—	
Motor Vehicles Calls--	
Other Calls—	

Total Calls:	
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Mohegan Fire Company (February 2026)

Incidents/Calls:	In District	CO1	CO3	CO4	Mutual Aid
EMS	77	53	1	4	1 (Casino)
Lift Assist	1	7	0	0	0
Fire Alarm	4	2		2	1 Fort Hill
MVA	4	5	0	0	0
Structure Fire	1	2	1	0	0
Utility Emergency	2	2	0	0	0
Smoke Investigation	1	0	0	0	0
HAZMAT	1	3	0	0	0
Service Call	3	0	1	0	0
Vehicle Fire		1	0	0	
Total: 172	95	75	2	0	0

No Volunteers on calls in districts: 62
Ambulance Transports with no paid staff: 3
Ambulance Transports by other Departments in District: 10
Ambulance Transports from other districts: 40

Oakdale Fire Company (January 2026)*

Incidents:	Total
No Emergency -- (17.1%)	12
Public Service -- (22.9%)	16
Rescue -- (1.4%)	01
Fire -- (1.4%)	01
Hazardous Situation – (5.7%)	04
Incident Type Undefined – (1.4%)	01
Medical – (50.0%)	35
Total Calls:	70

*A report was not received for February 2026.

Chesterfield Fire Company (February 2026)

Incidents:	Total
No Emergency – (17.5%)	10
Public Service – (15.8%)	09
Fire Calls -- (5.3%)	03
Hazardous Situations – (7.0%)	04
Medical – (54.4%)	31
Total Calls:	57

b. Report from Animal Control Liaison. (Callaghan)

The February 2026 Animal Control Activity Reports for the Towns of Montville, Colchester, Salem, Bozrah and Mohegan Tribe were submitted by Police Officer/ACO Bruce Rebelo. Lt. Radford read these reports into the record under Agenda Item 9, as follows:

Town of Montville Animal Control Report (February 2026)

Activity	Month	YTD FY
# of Animals Impounded:	4	83
# of Animals Sold as Pets:	1	10
# of Animals D.O.A.:	1	4
# of Animals Euthanized:	1	4
Total Complaints Investigated	46	491
Total Animal Bites Investigated:	1	20
Total Enforcement Action:	0	8
Total Other Calls for Service:	54	404

Town of Colchester Animal Control Report (February 2026)

Activity	Month	YTD FY
# of Animals Impounded:	2	26
# of Animals Sold as Pets:	1	11
# of Animals D.O.A.:	0	3
# of Animals Euthanized:	0	1
Total Complaints Investigated:	10	98
Total Animal Bites Investigated:	2	11
Total Enforcement Action:	0	0
Total Other Calls for Service	0	0

Town of Salem Animal Control Report (February 2026)

Activity	Month	YTD FY
# of Animals Impounded:	2	5
# of Animals Sold as Pets:	0	0
# of Animals D.O.A.:	0	0
# of Animals Euthanized:	0	0
Total Complaints Investigated	5	41
Total Animal Bites Investigated:	0	1
Total Enforcement Action:	0	0
Total Other Calls for Service:	0	0

Town of Bozrah Animal Control Report (February 2026)

Activity	Month	YTD FY
# of Animals Impounded:	0	0
# of Animals Sold as Pets:	0	0
# of Animals D.O.A.:	0	0
# of Animals Euthanized:	0	0
Total Complaints Investigated	4	21
Total Animal Bites Investigated:	0	0
Total Enforcement Action:	0	0
Total Other Calls for Service:	0	0

Mohegan Tribe Animal Control Report (February 2026)

Activity	Month	YTD FY
# of Animals Impounded:	0	1
# of Animals Sold as Pets:	0	0
# of Animals D.O.A.:	0	0
# of Animals Euthanized:	0	0
Total Complaints Investigated	0	3
Total Animal Bites Investigated:	0	0
Total Enforcement Action:	0	0
Total Other Calls for Service:	0	0

c. Report from Police Department Liaison. (Gillette)

Commissioner Gillette read into the record the Police Department statistics for the month ending February 28, 2026, as follows:

Police Department Activity – February 2026	Total
Total Calls for Service	950
Citations:	
Infractions	29
Juvenile Summons	0
Misdemeanors	6
Written Warnings	135
Total Citations	170

d. Report from Building Department Liaison. (Stewart)

The Building Department statistics for February 2026 were read into the record by Vice-Chair Stewart, as follows:

2025-2026 Building Department Report												
	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Permits Issued	118	80	102	161	99	108	74	78				
Pending Permits	71	90	62	22	38	9	12	89				
Inspections	151	123	143	167	142	181	106	103				
Active Blight	298	302	305	308	303	306	311	316				
Blight Abated To Date	573	575	590	594	596	601	604	608				
Blight--Pending	11	9	6	3	2	6	4	6				
Blighted Property Liens												

10. Remarks from Fire Chiefs. -- None

11. Unfinished Business.

- a.** To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve a Policy to systemize and retain firefighter data to observe trends and effectiveness.

Chairperson Murphy asked the Commission if it Mayor Bunnell acknowledged that it has been three (3) years since this item was placed on the agenda but noted as well that there has been

no lack of effort that has included a lot of research and hours spent. He plans to speak with the Fire Chiefs on the same. Chairperson Murphy noted that more information has been given regarding the calls. The Mayor added that the idea is to get all four (4) fire companies on the same system to acknowledge what, when and how it is being used. Commissioner Lougee inquired about who is validating the responses; the Mayor remarked that it will be in a system of checks and balances that has always been his goal. If the Town refers on data, Commissioner Lougee is interested in whether the data specifies who is doing what at each call. Commissioner Perkins asked for clarification of the reports; Vice-Chair Stewart reported that numbers are being reviewed in addition to staff and manpower available. Commissioner Perkins inquired if each fire company is expected to clarify data; Vice-Chair Stewart remarked that relying on data is reliance on staff. In each fire company, firefighters must complete a run sheet according to Chairperson Murphy; Vice-Chair Stewart remarked that the data is needed as continuing to hire is not affordable given taxes etc. Commissioner Perkins noted that answers are being sought but are not available yet.

b. Update to the Fire Companies' radio system.

Fire Chief Messer of Oakdale Fire Company reported that per discussion with the State it has approved the Town system and approved a vendor to provide a quote. The State is working with the vendor regarding radio capabilities and sufficiency for the Town needs. The Fire Chief spoke with the State this morning and the Town has allocated \$350,000 that will absorb a large portion of the cost for portables for the fire marshal, deputy fire marshal, career staff and base radios. It will take care of costs for the phase 1 but no talking radios for vehicles as the portables can handle and support operations until the changeover. For the second phase, \$450,000 is needed from the Town and this amount includes the vendor discount effective until June 2026. The cost for the portables is \$3,200 and mobiles are just under \$3,000. Each fire company chief has provided feedback on their needs for the equipment--each will have at least one (1) portable in every apparatus, and the VHS system is still available for use.

13. New Business.

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Recommend the replacement of a police cruiser totaled in an accident in the amount of \$32,200.00.**

Chairperson Murphy noted that this agenda item did initially come to the Commission for approval and was ultimately paid for by the insurance company as the Commission did not meet for two (2) months. Approval for the same was made to voice Commission support.

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the replacement of a police cruiser totaled in an accident in the amount of \$32,200.00.

Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all approved. Motion approved.**

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- b. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve the 2026 Commission Meeting Schedule as follows: January 26, February 23, March 23, April 27, Wednesday May 27, June 22, July 27, August 24, September 28, October 26, November 23, December 14, and January 25, 2027. The meetings will be held in the Town Council Chambers at 6:00 p.m.**

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Lougee to approve the 2026 Commission Meeting Schedule as follows: January 26, February 23, March 23, April 27, Wednesday May 27, June 22, July 27, August 24, September 28, October 26, November 23, December 14, and January 25, 2027. The meetings will be held in the Town Council Chambers at 6:00 p.m. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all approved. Motion approved.**

- c. To Consider and Act on a Motion for recommendation of an ATV Ordinance to the Town Council.

Chairperson Murphy asked for comments regarding the motion; Mayor Bunnell noted that everyone should have the information in their packet. Vice-Chair Stewart noted that per comments, the ordinance seems to be reasonable and also noted the area in town used for this activity is Eversource transmission line right-of-ways. Eversource will not grant permission verbally or in writing for its use. The Mayor also remarked that changes and issues were voiced and approved and sent back to the Town Council. If an Officer spots someone on known private property, action can be taken per a written complaint from the property owner. According to the Mayor, another issued that was reviewed was control of how the ATVs are fueled. The Chairperson noted that any property owner that grants permission for this activity is an idiot as they will be held through their insurance provider. He also reported that every enforcement should be done if ATVs and minibikes riding on the roads that are not registered i.e. taken away and sold or destroyed as they are a danger. The Chairperson reported that New London, Waterford and Norwich other towns have pursued and prevented this issue on their roads leaving the riders to come to other towns such as Montville. Mayor Bunnell reported that a magistrate system is needed and is being pursued. A **Motion** was not made although a roll call vote was unanimously approved for action on this item. *The Commission took a break at 6:50 p.m. and returned to session at 6:55 p.m.*

- d. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve the FY2026-2027 Public Safety Budgets and Capital Improvement Plans.

Motion by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Commissioner Lougee to approve the **Fire Marshal Emergency Management FY2026-2027 Budget** in the amount of **\$144,485**. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*, Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan, and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. All in favor. Motion approved.**

Motion by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Vice-Chair Stewart to approve the **Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshal FY2026-2027 Budget** (that includes the Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshal and Secretary that is split with Emergency Management) in the amount of **\$147,435**. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*, Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan, and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. All in favor. Motion approved.**

Motion by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Commissioner Lougee to approve the **Public Safety Commission FY2026-2027 Budget** in the amount of **\$2,000**. **Amended Motion** by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Chairperson Murphy to approve the Public Safety

Commission FY2026-2027 increase in budget in the amount of \$2,500. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*; Commissioners Gillette, Callaghan, Lougee, Murphy, Stewart, Perkins. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved as Amended. Original Motion vote:**

Motion by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Commissioner Lougee to approve **FY2026-2027 Fire Budget** that includes firefighter salaries, overtime budget, training and uniforms in the amount of **\$2,090,375**. Discussion: Chairperson Murphy asked if there was an increase in the budget; Vice-Chair remarked that there is, but he did not total the increase. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*; Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan, and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. All in favor. Motion approved.**

The **Fire Marshal CIP Budget includes an IT Table in FY2027** for review and organization of pictures in the amount of **\$10,890** and radios in FY 2027-2028 that are in the grant discussed earlier by Fire Chief Messer for radio portables. Fire Marshal CIP also includes six (6) sets of gear, so each firefighter has two (2) sets as well as two (2) pairs of gloves in the amount of **\$33,840**. The Fire Marshal keeps track of the gear that is stored and added that they are also inspected yearly, cleaned and/or replaced, in response to a question by Chairperson Murphy. **Motion** by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded Commissioner Lougee to approve the **Fire Marshal CIP**. Discussion: The **motion was withdrawn** to include the IT Table in the **FY2026-2027 Fire Marshal CIP** for a total amount of **\$10,890**, as IT agreed to the purchase of the table, as noted by Town Councilor Baker. **Motion** by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Lougee to approve the **Fire Marshal FY 2026-2027 CIP** in the amount of **\$33,840** for six (6) sets of gear. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*; Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan, and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. All in favor. Motion approved.** Fire Marshal Meigel commented on turnout gear for an additional person—a fire inspector given the expansion of new housing and businesses coming into the Town who would review plans and also supervise career staff. Per Vice-Chair Stewart there was a fire inspector at one time, but the position was cut by the Mayor due to cost. Chairperson Murphy asked if the position was parttime. The Fire Marshal stated the position can be per diem including the minimum cost for benefits and added that if someone is out that for safety purposes there should be two (2) person coverage for a higher quality of assurance and a way to not cause benefits for the Town as he does enough scheduling with fulltime staff. The Fire Marshal also responded to how long he has been working alone that has been since Fire Marshal Barnes left in July 2025 and having no assistance in that time. The are grant options, updates and an explosion of buildings and people expanding construction that does not make it easy. The Chairperson proposed a 19½ hour position without benefits. **Motion** by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Commissioner Lougee **to hire a parttime person for a 19½ hour position for the Fire Marshal office**. Discussion: Vice-Chair Stewart understands that the parttime position is not ideal but if the situation worsens it can be readdressed next year and given where the budget system is heading it will help out in the beginning according to the Chairperson. Town Councilor Baker suggested working with Human Resources regarding the salary for a

parttime hourly rate; Mayor Bunnell will work with Maria in Human Resources on the same. Discussion was also had for four (4) additional firefighters by Fire Marshal Meigel who reported that staff is needed at Chesterfield and Mohegan Fire Companies due to increased call volume and spoke about a recent fire that was an issue regarding manpower and would have been appropriate to have at the scene. The Fire Marshal reiterated that the Town population has grown, the Lofts are open, call volume is up, and the Mohegan Tribe has not accommodated need. Chairperson Murphy explained that if Mohegan Tribe needs us we go there as that is what mutual aid is all about. **No action was taken on the motion on the floor regarding a per diem firefighter position as it was withdrawn.** **Motion** by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Vice-Chair Stewart **to not hire four (4) new firefighters** as proposed by the Fire Marshal. Discussion: Fire Marshal Meigel reported that towns are expanding and the firefighters are working with the bare minimum and according to NFTA there should be 16 firefighters on shift. The Chairperson noted that there is a hiring freeze in Waterford, East Lyme, Ledyard and Colchester and suggested a change in scheduling. The Fire Marshal also referenced the response time to calls. The Chairperson reported that the Town is not hiring new EMS personnel as it has relatively low fires. Commissioner Perkins reported having spoken with the Fire Chiefs who reported that volunteers are working and volumes are down. Volunteers also do not want to do it for liability reasons. The status of volunteers in area towns was discussed as well as weekend scheduling issues, overtime for career staff, and the population of commercial versus residential that are not the same as the demographics and are different according to Town Councilor Baker. It was proposed that discussion be had at the next Finance Committee meeting that is on April 2nd. A plan must be had regarding the cost for increased staff with a comprehensive plan presentation to the Finance Committee added the Town Councilor. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*, Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, and Callaghan. *Opposed*, Commissioner Gillette. **5-1-0. Motion approved.**

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the **FY2026-2027 Public Safety Building Budget** in the amount of **\$88,250** that includes electricity, building maintenance, gas, water and sewer in addition to miscellaneous supplies, but no salaries. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*, Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Chairperson Murphy to approve the **FY2026-2027 Animal Control Budget** in the amount of **\$104,450** that includes the new building, maintenance of the old building, the assistant's salary, but not the ACO salary. The cost of facility operations was questioned; Lt. Radford reported that there is no propane. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*, Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Chairperson Murphy to approve the **FY2026-2027 Dispatch Budget** in the amount of **\$1,026, 155**. Discussion: The budget does not include

dispatcher salaries but does include overtime of \$325,000; a parttime position, maintenance, annual upkeep, and Nextgen upgrades per Lt. Radford. Radio dispatch was covered in the Police Department budget according to Town Councilor Baker. The Nextgen upgrade was done last year as questioned by Commissioner Lougee. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*; Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the **FY2026-2027 Police Department Budget** in the amount of **\$3,690,345** that includes overtime, special events, programs, weapons, and uniforms. Lt. Radford reported that the Department has four (4) years into a system change that will occur next year in addition to change regarding the uniform allowance. It was discussed to have a separate line item change for uniforms of \$23,500. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*; Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to approve the **FY2026-2027 Police Department CIP Budget** in the amount of **\$38,211** that includes one (1) item for tasers. Discussion: Lt. Radford reported that 10 were put in place last year for a 5-year payment plan and that the second payment has been paid on the plan. The tasers are part of an ongoing program. Chairperson Murphy asked what happens to the old ones; Lt. Radford referred to having tried a fund in the west and having sold them at a cost of \$10,300 that went into the General Fund. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*; Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

Motion by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Commissioner Lougee to approve the **FY2026-2027 Building Department Budget** in the amount of **\$314,400**. Discussion: It was reported that the Building Official could not attend the meeting tonight. Town Councilor Baker asked about the increase in building fees that Mayor Bunnell reported are in the works and will be forwarded to the Town Council. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*; Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

Motion by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Vice-Chair Stewart for approval of **an office upgrade of \$20,000 and Municipality Customization of \$20,000 for the FY2026-2027 Building Department CIP Budget** in the amount of **\$40,000** that excludes the purchase of the 4-wheel drive SUV for \$40,000. Discussion: Chairperson Murphy proposed excepting everything but the vehicle at \$40,000. Vice-Chair Stewart explained that all vehicles are purchased through Public Works. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*; Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

The Commission continued with budget review of the Fire Department CIP that was missed and provided by Chief Turner that included three (3) items with a priority rating. Initially

discussed was replacement of the Montville Fire Company M-15 aerial ladder truck that services the entire Town. The estimated cost is \$2,200,000 but at \$3,010,000 if delayed. The apparatus is in good shape but must meet certain requirements. The truck was put in service in 2004, and the aim is to start the replacement timeline this year as it takes four (4) years for delivery. **Motion** by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Chairperson Murphy **to approve the FY2026-2027 Fire Department CIP request for an M-15 Aerial Ladder Truck** in the amount of **\$2,200,000**. Discussion: Questions were asked by Commissioner Perkins as to whether the truck is needed for construction of buildings, a ladder to extend out and whether it is only used in Town for large fires. It was reported that the truck is taken out for every fire, but it is coming to the end of its life and funds must begin to be saved. The question was asked if all vehicles must be assessed. Vice-Chair Stewart noted it is an issue of liability and noted they are inspected yearly. Chairperson Murphy reported that funds must be saved and the Town Council put on notice although they are typically bonded out according to the Vice-Chair. Fire Marshal Meigel reported that the truck is being certified annually and is being maintained. The truck is used for bigger, higher industrial buildings. Vice-Chair Stewart remarked that there are plenty of these ladder trucks in the area. He also explained to Commissioner Perkins that if a contract is written for the truck now the cost starts at the base price knowing that the cost will increase. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*, Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

Turn-out gear was the next Fire Department CIP item. The gear is split between the four (4) fire companies, five (5) sets per year, are only good for 10 years and can only be used outside, not inside. **Motion** by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Chairperson Murphy **to purchase for the FY2026-2027 five (5) sets of Turn-out Gear** and the need for them to be determined by the Fire Company Chiefs at a cost of **\$100,000**. Discussion: Chairperson Murphy reported that in the past each Fire Company worked it out among themselves. Town Councilor Baker added that the gear is tested every 7-10 years. As to the number that are purchased is tailored to the membership. Mayor Bunnell noted that the cost was less at \$15,000 per year if more are bought and is not seen in the CIP for volunteers. Chairperson Murphy inquired why the cost is not forecasted out; Vice-Chair Stewart noted that the price this year is \$100,00; the second year at \$120,000 for two (2) years and the third year cost for the same would also be \$120,000. It was reported that this item used to part of individual budgets and was changed a few years ago as a request in CIP and not included in the budget. In the past, the cost for full gear was \$1,000; it is now \$5,000 giving the fire companies the same budget. Fire Chief Suarez that his fire company purchased all new gear in 2019 and will be coming up again soon. The Fire Marshal commented that all get two (2) sets of gear while others present said one (1). **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*, Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

The final and third Fire Department CIP Item is self-contained and is 12 air packs with face masks with a life expectancy and is part of a program. The same type of air pack bottle can

be tested by so many cycles at a total cost of **\$180,000** and can be tested by so many. The Vice-Chair noted that the air packs should continue to be replaced according. **Motion** by Commissioner Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Lougee to approve the purchase of **12 Air Packs with Face Masks for the Fire Department FY2026-2027 CIP** in the amount of **\$180,000** for security purposes. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor*, Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, Lougee, Callaghan and Gillette. *Opposed*, none. **6-0-0. Motion approved.**

14. Remarks from the Public three-minute limit.

Chairperson Murphy asked three (3) times for remarks. Resident Kim Doyle of 19 Sharp Hill Road, Uncasville remarked about data retrieval referred to in Agenda Item 11.a that needs to be ripped apart and given a deep dive. She concurred with Commissioner Lougee’s earlier comment and stated that as a taxpayer the last two (2) audits that are required she finds hypocritical concerning money that is not coming back to the Town and referenced a fire truck as something to consider. ‘She suggested data review be done from volunteers to paid staff; K. Doyle also noted that audits by the Fire Department need only to include funds provided by the Town and a full audit is not required on an annual basis. She further commented on the funds attained from ambulance calls that can be saved or used appropriately; things that should be considered but are quite negligent and require deeper scrutiny particularly where the funds need to go and how they are spent. K. Doyle said that she will put together an email concerning her comments this evening with a copy to be sent to the Town Council and the Commission as to where all fire company funds are being spent, not just the \$90,000 from the Town but regarding accountability of the fire companies. Mike Moran of 117 Seabury Road, Lebanon, CT welcomed Commissioner Lougee to the Commission. He then remarked about data points noting that last year from November 25 to February 22nd of this year, the fire companies had 1050 total calls. The calls included mutual aid (6), MDAs (41), fires (79) Hazmat (27), service calls (8) and utility (19). Of the total calls, 864 EMS related calls by fire company as follows: Company #1, 344; Company #2, 309; Company #3, 76 and Company #4 169. M. Moran noted that there needs to be a plan going forward concerning data retrieval and a fire service that is working together, not as paid staff versus volunteers. Josh Braga of 155 Old Colchester Road remarked that a plan is needed for extra staffing, a town-wide Fire Chief who would serve as a means for planning and extra staffing, in addition to one (1) set of SOPs, SOGs etc. as suggested by Town Councilor Baker.

15. Remarks from the Mayor.

Mayor Bunnell remarked on his appreciation of the Police Department and the Officers named by Lt. Radford of getting recognition for making the right decision and good arrests. He also reported that the firefighter contract has not been approved and he is disappointed. The Mayor also apologized for missing the swearing in ceremony this evening noting that the fire personnel have good hearts. He added that Deputy Fire Marshal Roberts has come up with some good suggestions concerning involvement and also about having heard good things about Firefighter Delmastro. The Mayor also recognized the services provided by the Town Animal

Control Officer and noted that all the towns serviced by the Montville are happy and praised the ACO for his efforts. The Mayor also reported that NECOG has called about getting on board but has since reversed their initial decision. Lastly, Mayor Bunnell commented on the \$350,000 from the Town for the new firefighter radios and remarked that effort is being made to get the remaining \$500,000 grant from the State.

16. Remarks from Town Council Liaison.

Town Councilor Baker welcomed Steve Lougee to the Commission and remarked on his input this evening. He also remarked that he is looking forward to working with Deputy Fire Marshal Roberts and Firefighter Delmastro and that they both have a safe, long careers. The Town Councilor also recognized the positive correspondence regarding the Police Officers praised them for doing a good job. As well, he thanked Firefighters Josh Braga, Mitch Doyle and Noah Dombrowski who successfully passed the Fire Instructor 1 certification training. Town Councilor Baker then remarked that he was sorry to currently be on the Finance Commission but urged that a comprehensive plan be brought forward regarding the budgets and plans for increasing fire staff and discussed this evening and noted that one (1) mill rate equates to \$1,600,000 taxes. The Town Councilor then thanked the Public Safety team for supplying the police department and fire department data that he addresses to the Town Council. He also congratulated the new Deputy Fire Marshal and Firefighter and remarked on the hard decisions that are made but at the end of it all he wants all to be safely protected by the Police Department and the Fire Companies. As for the budget, he hopes that we have all that we need to keep safe.

17. Remarks from Commissioners.

Commissioner Callaghan congratulated the fire personnel sworn in this evening and welcomed Commissioner Lougee. She remarked about the hard decisions that need to be made when money is discussed and added that although you feel bad the aim or goal is that everyone stays safe at all costs that make her feel and sleep better. Commissioner Lougee commented on the forefathers of this Town who built the roads which are not easily accessed with a tanker and will never compare to a former 1710 or 1720 town. He also noted that the Town cannot be compared to other towns and spoke of his commitment to supporting it. As well, having lived in Norwich for 17 years he spoke of the horrible state of its fire service and remarked that as a Commissioner he has a lot to learn and wants to contribute. Commissioner Perkins remarked that the Town has to have more firefighters, but she agrees with Town Councilor Baker and Commissioner Callaghan that the numbers must be present to finance. Vice-Chair Stewart remarked that he did not envy the job regarding this budget. He congratulated the new hires recognized this evening and asked that everyone be safe. Chairperson Murphy remarked that his wife tells him that Montville has nothing good to say if the Town raises taxes by 1 mill as all will be screaming. People will also comment after listening to the meeting recording to make the Town Council and the Mayor look bad. Fifteen years ago the Chairperson remarked that he was a fire chief for 30 years and emphasized that the Town needs a town-wide Fire Chief. A plan must be developed, and it is not that simple. The comment by Mrs. Dole

regarding an audit he noted can be found on the Town website that includes acquiring information about federal funds as well as information about Medicare and Medicaid that can be found as did the Union. The Chairperson also remarked about the radios stating that something must be done to obtain them for all public safety personnel as the ones in use are terrible. He also reported having met with Police Chief Blanchette about the funds offered by Dime Bank thanking them for their effort. Chairperson Murphy also thanked Vice-Chair Stewart for stepping up for him due to damage to his lungs.

18. Adjournment.

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Perkins to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 6-0-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

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

**AN AUDIO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE ON THE TOWN
OF MONTVILLE WEBSITE.**