

Town of Montville
Finance Committee Special Meeting
April 16, 2026
5:00 P.M. Room 203

1. Call to Order

Chairperson May called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Chairperson May, Councilor Kate Southard, Councilor Brian Baker. Others in attendance were Mayor Leonard G. Bunnell Sr., Finance Director Julie Chapman, Lt. David Radford, Chief Blanchette (via Zoom), Councilor Rachel Novak and Executive Assistant to the Mayor, Cindy Breton

4. Police Department - Fiscal Year 2026-2027-Mayor's Proposed Budget

Lt. Radford began by discussing the request for the overtime budget. He raised staffing issues, including an officer on military leave until September. Another officer left at the end of December, creating open shifts. There are also several unfunded mandates and training requirements necessary to maintain certifications and licensing. Chief Blanchette added that the newest hire, who replaced Bruce Rebello after he transferred to Animal Control, is currently in FTO. Canine Officer Mora is still attending Canine School, along with another officer, for three months. Additional factors contributing to staffing issues included vacation and sick-time coverage for shifts that must be filled. Councilor Baker stated that he was less interested in the exact amount of overtime and more concerned with the categories that would fall under overtime.

Chief Blanchette stated that with 32 officers, all shifts would be covered.

Mayor Bunnell went on to say that significant reductions had already been made while preparing his budget proposal. For example, cuts were made to radio repairs, weapons and ammunition, vehicle supplies, physicals, DARE supplies, and equipment. Chairperson May indicated that he only saw a \$1,000 decrease, but the Finance Director explained that the uniform allowance had been increased to cover a contractual boot allowance. This increased the uniform budget from \$18,000 to \$23,500. Chairperson May said to keep in mind that there is a contingency line available if they experience a hardship. He stated that he does not want to see citizens taxed on money that may be left over at the end of the year. When Councilor Novak questioned the grant money, Chairman May and Lt. Radford explained that the funds were simply pass-throughs. He further explained that citizens should not be taxed on money that is actually revenue. Chairperson May also noted that some of the fees for Private Duty and Administrative services had been increased. The Finance Director stated that some of those funds had been used for replacement vehicles. Lt. Radford mentioned that the canine expense line is currently negative and is essentially supported through donations. Chief Blanchette added that when Canine Gunner suffered a medical issue and had to be euthanized, the department incurred another \$10,000 expense for a new dog, and even with donations, the costs are likely to place them in a difficult financial position.

Chairman May made a recommendation to increase the amount back to \$1,500. All agreed, 3-0.

Mayor Bunnell indicated that there are four events that could be funded through special revenue. Councilor Southard stated that the Carnival is not a money-making event. Chairman May commented that there had been years when the Carnival generated a profit, and that profit should have covered some of the in-kind services. Councilor Novak questioned whether the RTC and the Democratic Council pay for booths at the Carnival while also making money from food sales, and the response was yes.

Chairperson May stated that the fee is \$100 per table, with some groups receiving two tables while others receive one.

5. Animal Control

Mayor Bunnell stated that cuts were made in this area as well. Lt. Radford explained that there is currently one Animal Control Officer (ACO), and the budget includes funding for four part-time assistants.

Chairperson May reminded the Councilors that revenue is being received from Salem, Bozrah, Colchester, and the Tribe. He added that, because of this revenue, the budget is self-sufficient. Chairperson May also noted that with the new facility, the numbers are expected to fluctuate over the next several years.

Lt. Radford mentioned that state statute requires the department to advertise in the newspaper for any stray or abandoned animals that are unclaimed and to wait seven days for a response before the animal can be adopted out. Chief Blanchette stated that this requirement may change in October due to the increased use of social media. Lt. Radford further noted that if the Montville Animal Welfare Initiative had not aided this year, the account balance would have been negative by at least \$10,000.

6. Dispatch

Lt. Radford stated that there are currently eight full-time dispatchers. At this time, there are no part-time dispatchers. The position was previously advertised, but no applications were received. The position will now be posted on Indeed.

Chief Blanchette stated that under the collective bargaining agreement (CBA), full-time dispatchers will have the right of first refusal, in response to a question from Chairperson May regarding whether part-time dispatchers would help reduce overtime costs. He explained that several of the full-time dispatchers have been with the department for many years and receive a significant amount of time off. Overall, it is believed that adding part-time dispatchers will make a difference.

The Finance Director stated that overtime costs are currently on track to reach between \$260,000 and \$270,000 by the end of the year. Chairperson May recommended setting the amount at \$260,000 and expressed hope that part-time dispatchers would help reduce those costs.

Lt. Radford mentioned that next year the department will need to replace two 24-hour dispatch chairs, which cost approximately \$3,500 each. When it was suggested that the chairs be included under Capital expenditures, the Finance Director reiterated that Capital items require a minimum cost of \$5,000. As a result, replacing one chair per year would adequately meet the department's needs. Chief Blanchette also requested that the replacement schedule continue again in three years and then transition to a two-year replacement plan.

Chairperson May made a recommendation to purchase one chair this year and one the following year. The vote passed 2-1, with Councilor Baker expressing dissatisfaction with the proposal.

7. Public Safety Building

Lt. Radford stated that the proposed budget was based on the actual expenditures observed in the current budget. He explained that the building maintenance costs were generated by the replacement of a door.

Chief Blanchette noted that there are several unfunded mandates imposed by the legislature that the Town is required to address, placing the financial burden on the municipality. He also stated that costs across several categories have increased, including electricity, natural gas, water, sewer, and other utilities.

Capital Improvement Plan

Mayor Bunnell recommended including one police vehicle in the new budget. Chairperson May stated that he would like to take a closer look at Private Duty with the Finance Director. The Finance Director inquired whether Private Duty revenue fluctuates or has remained relatively steady.

Chief Blanchette stated that the department would be negatively impacted with only one new police vehicle because there would be no spare vehicles available. Chairperson May explained that the spending freeze serves as an additional level of review to determine whether expenditures are truly essential. The Finance Director noted that the IT equipment cost for one police vehicle is approximately \$18,750, with the remaining expense attributable to the vehicle itself.

Adjournment 6:39pm

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Breton, Executive Assistant to Mayor Leonard G. Bunnell, Sr.