

Town of Montville  
**Economic Development Commission**  
Meeting Minutes for Monday, October 20, 2014  
7:00 p.m. – Montville Town Hall - Room 203

1. Call to Order  
Vice-chairman Mattson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. after establishing a quorum.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call  
Present were Marge Gatheral, Ann Matson, John Protz, Jim Toner, and Tina White. Absent were Victoriano Alarcon, Karl Butzgy, and Dustin White. Also present was Town Council Liaison Tom McNally.
4. Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (3 Minute limit) — none.
5. Alterations to the Agenda — none.
6. To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve:
  - a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of June 16, 2014  
Motion made by Commissioner Gatheral, seconded by Commissioner Toner. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. Motion passed.
  - b. The Regular Meeting Minutes of July 21, 2014  
Motion made by Commissioner Gatheral, seconded by Commissioner Toner. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. Motion passed.
  - c. The Regular Meeting Minutes of September 15, 2014  
Motion made by Commissioner Gatheral, seconded by Commissioner Protz. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. Motion passed.
7. Unfinished Business
  - a. Update and Town SWOT Analysis w/Town Planner Marcia Vlaun  
Town Planner Marcia Vlaun distributed the Community Profile and Marketing Reports to the Committee. Prior to the Committee conducting a SWOT Analysis for the Town, she felt it important for the Committee to have a strong picture of the current state of the community, which she hopes to accomplish with her presentation.  
  
Population: The population of Montville is listed in the last decennial census as 19,511, but the number must be adjusted to get a true picture as it also includes those who are housed in group quarters, i.e., the Correctional Facility, at the time the census is taken. The true population of the Town is 17,889. While the increased population might be beneficial when

applying for grants, it does not provide a true picture of such items as debt per capita or per capita tax since inmates are not required to pay taxes.

Demographic Trend: The basic demographic trend is similar to other New England towns. The population of youths from under five to 24 years of age is declining while those in the 45-85 age group is increasing. The median age has increased approximately eight (8) years from the 1990 to 2010 decennial census and deaths are outnumbering births. In addition, as evidenced in the school system, enrollment of students is declining. With these trends in mind, changes to the policies and/or investments of the Town should be considered. Some have introduced programs to the Town Council in an effort to encourage more senior housing, but she felt that emphasis should be place on attracting and keeping younger people to keep the area and community more viable and provide a workforce. During this period, the minority population also saw an increase. The African-American population jumped from the 1990 to 2000 decennial census and has since remained steady. Due to the casino, the largest rise in population was with Asians, but, she suspects, that population will reflect a decline in the next census due to the recent layoffs. In 1990, the true population of the Town was 16,673, with only 366 individuals living in group quarters. After the Correctional Facility was constructed, the population of the Town increased due to a 77% increase of those living in group quarters, but the true population remained stable, reflecting a 3-5% growth.

Student Enrollment: The five-year student enrollment numbers received by the State, with whom the Board of Education (BOE) files their Strategic School Profile, reflects that school enrollment is declining, which brings rise to the question of why we continue to level funding where policy and investment are concerned. Commissioner Protz stated that the Superintendent of Schools met with the Commission in the recent past and stated that they were losing several students to charter schools and confirmed that the numbers in her Profile reflect enrolled children rather than school-aged eligible children. Town Planner Vlaun stated that, while the BOE lost more students to private schools than predicted, in terms of the actual population, the number of births and of people per household reflects a general decline. The age group(s) included in the small population increase is primarily attributed to the large influx of casino workers from 2000-2010. This spike in the workforce has disappeared with the recent recession.

Households (person or group of persons, related or unrelated) and Families (related members living together): Information based on the 2012 American Community Survey reflects that individuals per household have also been steadily declining. This indicates that people are having less children and the number of people per housing unit is continuing to decrease over time. It is estimated at 79% of the housing in Town is owner-occupied while 21% is renter-occupied. In addition, people are entering the housing market at a later age. Renters outnumber homeowners in the 25-34 age group and do not enter the housing market until ages 45-54. This delay is a sign of non-affordability of housing and low-wages.

Contrary to popular belief and as reflected in the numbers, an increase in rental housing does not flood the market with small, school-aged children.

Housing Supply and Cost: The importance lies in the relationship between housing supply and cost lies in the affordability of housing and the ability to attract and keep its labor force. The State of Connecticut is currently rated number eight (8) on the least affordable housing list. The average homeowner in Montville has a median income of approximately \$76,000.00 and a median monthly homeowner cost of \$1,800.00 while the median renter income is approximately \$38,760 and the median rent in town is \$969.00. The National Low-Income Housing Coalition estimates that one would need to earn \$20.92 per hour to afford a typical two-bedroom rental (\$22.00 - \$23.00 per hour for the State).

Housing Construction also tells a tale of the economy. Post WWII housing construction reflects the existence of 2,600 housing units and an additional 2,095 units from 1970 to 1989. Construction remained steady from 1990 until the onset of the recession in 2004. Housing construction in Montville and Southeastern CT has yet to recover from the recession. Though those who purchased homes during the height of the housing bubble, from 2005-2008, still exist though the number of foreclosures have begun to decline. Of the over 5,500 housing units, 72% continue to maintain a mortgage. Currently, 3.89% of housing is considered being in the affordable range. Furthermore, while the housing bubble peaked in 2006, the cost of building a home has not significantly declined.

Grand List: The overall economy of the Town is reflected by its Grand List. AES Thames, which has maintained its position as one of the top five taxpayers in the past, are no longer in Town. In addition, the property owned by the United Nuclear Corporation, which was ranked third in 1994, is now occupied by the Mohegan Sun, a non-tax paying casino. Other properties, e.g., Mohegan Tribal Gaming, MTIC Acquisition, and the giant power sub-station on Route 32, dropped off the list as their taxable property was put into trust. Such commercial enterprises as Home Depot, CL&P, Rand-Whitney, Montville Commons have, in a sense, buoyed the Grand List in recent years.

Unemployment: The unemployment rate is based on the random calling of those filing for unemployment benefits resulting in some odd fluctuations. 2009 reflects a slight spike in the labor force though the number of employed decreases. The most recent report reflects that there are 704 unemployed individuals. Due to its unemployment rate, Montville is considered a distressed community. The unemployment rate in Town may have been contributed by the demise of AES Thames. Information provided by the Department of Labor reflects the number of employees in various professions/occupations and their median earnings as well as a listing of the ten (10) fastest growing occupations in the State. These occupations include Service, Personal Care Aids, and Home Health Aids — all of which are the lowest paying jobs. Though Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun have had significant layoffs, the good news in New London County is that General Dynamics, who offers decent wages, is currently hiring though they are unable to fill all of their positions. The top employers

include General Dynamics, Foxwoods, Mohegan Sun, Submarine Base, and Lawrence & Memorial Hospital. Increasing competition from casinos in New York and Massachusetts will also have an impact on the two casinos.

Poverty and Distressed Community: Also included in the report is the Thames Valley Council Community Needs Assessment Report, which provides a snapshot of the current state of poverty, and the Food Insecurity Rankings by towns in New London County.

Marketing Report: Utilizing the Geographic Information System (GIS), a Marketing Report was created. The Report looks at the population income, spending habits, and disposable income within a 15-, 20- and 30-mile geographical radius and 15-, 20- and 30-minute driving radius, designating Fair Oaks as the center of Town. The information proves valuable for those interested in starting a business or those businesses we may be trying to court into the area. Also included in the Report is the Spending Potential Index, which rates various items that are being purchased in the area showing what items are in demand as well as the spending potential for the area. It also categorizes and describes the type of person who is doing the purchasing. The information can be used to create an industry- and/or customer-specific presentation for potential businesses. Of the various profile indexes, CT is consistently ranked either 44 or 45 in economic performance and economic outlook. It is an ongoing struggle to attract economic development. Happily, the Town was able to attract an 80,000 square foot indoor recreation complex at Lombardi Business Park by streamlining the process and their ability to provide fire suppression water at the location. In addition, they have been able to maintain consistent commercial growth in the Town as reflected by the establishment of Best Market and Dollar General, both of which seem to be doing very well, generally well-occupied shopping centers as well as a couple of new commercial buildings which are currently in process. One of the impediments includes the AES Thames site where they have received multiple inquiries, but the building has yet to be demolished. Other impediments include the drive-in, four available lots in the Lombardi complex, infill along Route 32, and the property behind St. Bernard School.

She felt the Reports would provide a good basis for the Commission's SWOT analysis. She noted that she would be happy to provide a presentation regarding the strategic properties in Town, their zoning and what it means in the future. In response to Commissioner Toner who stated that one of the problems is that the Commission does not have access to the developers nor would they seek information from the EDC, Town Planner Vlaun stated that her goal as a Town Planner is to get them approved in a timely manner and to streamline the process and avoids asking them to take any additional, unnecessary steps. She also requested that the Commission inform her of their goals so that she might be able to aid them in the process. She noted that another prevalent trend are franchise searches. Franchises have a very specific plan and while they can attempt to court businesses, the Town may not meet their specific needs/wants. She also recommended the Commission access the Town's GIS via the Town's website, where they can view any kind of map, e.g.,

contours, tracts, parcels, etc., and includes such information as zoning, wetlands, soils, and parcels. The EDC, she felt, could promote positive publicity, continue hosting Business Expos, and work on a long-term strategic economic development plan, which she would like to work on with the Commission.

Commissioner Toner stated that many of the issues are prevalent in other towns, as well, and recommended the Commission review the Town's strengths and the weaknesses of other towns, which are opportunities for them.

Town Planner Vlaun stated that both of these reports are helpful to those departments who apply for grants and often request information. The information will be made available online following this presentation. She also requested the Commissioners relay to those who are absent that hard copies of their Reports may be picked-up at the Planning Office.

- b. Montville rebranding progress with other Town entities — none.
- c. Commissioner Projects Update — none

8. New Business

- a. Commissioner "Idea's For Action" (IFA) — none

Motion was made by Commissioner Toner, seconded by Commissioner Protz, to include on all future agendas, under Unfinished Business, SWOT Analysis continuation for a minimum and maximum of 60 minutes per meeting. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. Motion passed.

- b. Feedback from the townspeople and businesses — none.
- c. Brief and Review of proposals of EDC website design — none.
- d. Expansion of the water line to Montville's schools (WPCA Administrator Brian Lynch) Vice-chairman Mattson will contact Chairman White regarding the status of the item.
- e. Approval of follow-up letter to the attendees of September Business Resource Forum  
Commissioner Gatheral provided a list of the vendors and their addresses to Commissioner Toner for review. Commissioner Toner also stated that a sign-up sheet was available at the Forum, but was not completed by the attendees. On behalf of Ms. Ellen DesJardins, he expressed her concern regarding the lack of economic development in her area and requested that the members water the flowers in front of Town Hall.

9. Proposed Recipients for Business Recognition Award — none.

10. Update from Town Council Liaison Tom McNally

Councilor McNally apologized for missing the recent Commission meetings as he continues to toggle between the EDC and teacher negotiations.

11. Commissioner Action Items for Next Meeting — none.

12. Communications — none.

13. Remarks from the Public (3 Minute limit) — none.

14. Remarks from the Commissioners

Commissioner Toner requested Councilor McNally communicate to the Town Council the information which Town Planner Vlaun provided to the Commission this evening, e.g., the issue of blight and whether the Town might be able to step in and help businesses to deal with such issues, and the changing demographics of school-age children in relation to the budget. In addition, he felt that the BOE should find ways, with the help of the Town Council, to be more efficient and effective.

Councilor McNally encouraged the Commission to read and review the Public Safety Plan as it has some relevance to the Commission and their concerns.

Commissioner Gatheral expressed the need for better communication within the Town and its various governmental bodies.

15. Adjournment

Motion made by Commissioner Toner, seconded by Commissioner Gatheral, to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice Vote, 5-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville