

Town of Montville Town Council
Special Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.
Montville Town Hall, Town Council Chambers

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On March 14, 2020, Governor Ned Lamont issued an Executive Order 7B suspending in-person open meeting requirements, and to hold such meetings or proceedings remotely by conference call, videoconference or other technology.

Link: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-7B.pdf>

For all publicly broadcasted meetings, public comment on agenda items or topics in accordance with the Town Charter may be submitted in writing in advance or by live audio via GoToWebinar.

Written comments must be emailed to the Town Clerk at townclerk@montville-ct.org at least 1 working day in advance (if the meeting is on a Monday the questions must be submitted by close of business the previous Friday).

Written comments may not be read in their entirety, but rather similar messages may be aggregated or paraphrased for submission to the Mayor and Council.

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Comments will only be accepted at times designated for public comment by the Chair of the meeting. The Montville Town Council Rules of Procedure, decorum, timeliness and suitability shall be followed and enforced in the same manner as if the meeting were held in person.

1. Call to Order

Chairman May called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in honor of our military.

3. Roll Call

Present were Councilors Leonard Bunnell, Sr., Billy Caron, Joseph Jaskiewicz, Tim May, Kathleen Pollard, Colleen Rix, and Joseph Rogulski. Also present was Mayor Ronald McDaniel.

4. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit

Kate Southard, 89 Wildwood Lane, Uncasville, a member of the Parks & Recreation Commission, stated that she has reviewed the resignation letters and commented on her hopes that the Mayor and Town Council will do their due diligence to determine and resolve the issue(s) behind the resignations. She felt that the Commission has been doing a tremendous job.

The following comments, which were received via e-mail, were recited into the record:

Eileen Cicchese, 3 Michael's Way, Oakdale, a former member of the Parks & Recreation Commission and a seasoned Recreation professional for the Town of Groton, stated her experience serving as a member of the Commission and the reasoning(s) behind her subsequent resignation in 2016, citing one of the members' lack of respect for and antagonization of the

Director and her fellow Commissioners, resulting in the subsequent resignation of herself and four other Commissioners.

Nancy delaCruz, 21 Sharp Hill Road, Uncasville, who served on the Parks & Recreation Commission for 29 years before submitting her resignation in December of 2016, stated the reasoning(s) behind her resignation and the negative culture the Commission had become afforded with. She expressed her hopes for the future of the Commission and its contributions to a town that continues to thrive.

5. Executive Session

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussion of strategy and/or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining, without prejudice to the Council's right to discuss the same in private pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §1-200(2). Discussion to include members of the Town Council, Mayor Ronald McDaniel and Attorney Eileen Duggan.

Motion made by Councilor Bunnell, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Motion carried. Invited parties exited Chambers for Executive Session at 6:39 p.m. Chairman May resumed the meeting at 7:34 p.m. No votes were taken during Executive Session.

6. Appointments and Resignations

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to accept the resignation of Danielle Butzgy from the Parks & Recreation Commission effective immediately.
- b. To Consider and Act on a Motion to accept the resignation of Dawn Penman from the Parks & Recreation Commission effective immediately.
- c. To Consider and Act on a Motion to accept the resignation of Karen Perkins from the Parks & Recreation Commission effective immediately.

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Rix. Discussion: Councilors Caron and Rix expressed their regrets. Councilor Jaskiewicz stated his opposition to the resignations, feeling the need to engage in a conversation with the relevant parties in an attempt to resolve the issues. The common thread between all of the letters points to the need for increased communication between the Parks & Recreation Director and Commission. Councilor Bunnell agreed with the need to resolve the issue(s), but questioned whether the outgoing Commissioners would be willing to remain (active) on the Commission while the issues are addressed. The Memorandum from Shipman & Goodwin, LLP, regarding the duties and responsibilities of the Parks & Recreation Department and Commission, dated November 12, 2008, which was provided by Councilor Jaskiewicz, addresses many, if not all, of their questions. Parks & Recreation Liaison Councilor Rix reported that she has attended three in-person meetings and did experience the evident tension. Nevertheless, she was not aware of the pending resignations and none of the members had reached out to her to discuss any issues they might have. Following the receipt of the letters, she proceeded to contact the members and received only one response. She thanked Councilor Jaskiewicz for providing the Memorandum, which she has reviewed along with the Town Charter. While she expressed her dismay with the resignations, she would accept them as it may not be in the best interest of the Commission not to do so. In light of the Memorandum, she suggested educating the Commission on their roles and responsibilities. Chairman May tasked Councilor Rix to engage in an open conversation between the Commissioners and the Director. Councilor Pollard agreed that an open conversation was necessary and also suggested speaking with the Director regarding his response to the resignation letters; she expressed her wish for a positive change. Councilor Caron cautioned that, while any issues regarding the Commission are under their guise, those regarding Director are under the Mayor's purview. He added that the Commission does appear to have a history of resignations. Councilor Rogulski felt that their resignations should be accepted and should changes occur, they may opt to re-apply to serve on the Commission. In response to Chairman May who expressed his surprise at the resignations, Councilor Rogulski reminded him that a letter was written to the

Town Council regarding the Commission's issues in 2016 by a former Commissioner. He reiterated the suggestion for the Town Council Liaison to engage the Commissioners and the Director in an open discussion. Chairman May stated that either the Town Clerk or himself will be present to open the Commission's next meeting such that the officers could be elected. Mayor McDaniel reported that he has spoken with the Director, who will submit a written letter responding to the resignation letters. Once received, he will forward his response to the Councilors. Roll Call vote, 4-3. Voting in Favor: Councilors Pollard, Rix, Rogulski, and May. Voting in Opposition: Councilors Bunnell, Caron, Jaskiewicz. Motion carried.

7. Remarks from the Public with a three-minute limit

Karen Perkins, 22 Sachem Lane, Uncasville, one of the recently resigned members of the Parks & Recreation Commission, stated that the issues have been ongoing since the two previous Town Council Liaisons. The Commission is comprised of an awesome group of individuals. She is happy to respond to any questions or discuss the issues with Town Council Liaison Rix at any time.

8. Remarks from the Councilors and the Mayor

Councilor Bunnell expressed his appreciation to Councilor Jaskiewicz for providing the memorandum, which answers several questions, both past and present, and provides them with a good direction for the future. He also felt that the Town is headed in a good direction as they move forward with the contracts and wage adjustments, which are an important aspect in their efforts to maintain their good employees.

Councilor Jaskiewicz thanked the Commissioners for listening to him, stating that such open discussions are encouraging as they work together to accomplish their goals and achieve success.

Councilor Rix stated that she will reach out to the Commissioners, in addition to the three individuals who offered their resignation, to discuss the issues.

Councilor Pollard concurred with Councilor Jaskiewicz and is pleased with the manner in which the Councilors discuss the issues together. She encouraged everyone to contact them, noting that their contact information is posted on the Town website, and/or their elected State official(s) to voice any concerns they might have. She wished everyone a good night and a good summer.

Councilor Caron is pleased with their discussions and the positive direction they are taking to try and resolve the issues regarding the Parks & Recreation Commission and Director; he looks forward to their resolution.

Mayor McDaniel expressed his appreciation to Cathy Grohocki regarding the faulty reporting of COVID-19 cases in the Town of Montville, which he continues to be dismayed about. The lack of accurate reporting is a disservice to the town, its residents, and its businesses. He corrected that, at the last reporting, the town has 305 total cases, 261 of which derive from the Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Institute and 3 of which were miscounted, leaving the town with 41 cases to date, which is in line with other Connecticut communities. He encouraged everyone to contact their elected officials regarding the matter.

In that same vein, Chairman May added that the town is also known to have the highest per capita of eligible bachelors. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and was confident that the issues regarding the Parks & Recreation Commission and Director will end positively. He wished everyone a Happy Fourth of July and to stay safe.

9. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Bunnell, to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by: Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville

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LOCATED UNDER RESOURCES – FORM REPOSITORY – MEETING RECORDINGS**