

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Agenda – March 15, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES

The Town of Montville will be utilizing a virtual FreeConferenceCall service for this meeting.

Please call number below to attend the meeting at:

[1-\(605\) 313-5935](tel:1-605-313-5935)

[PIN # 401237](#)

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 FreeConferenceCall.

Written comments must be emailed to the Town Clerks Office 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 Economic Development Commission.

Live audio comments may be made via FreeConferenceCall by calling from your telephone.

Comments will only be accepted at times designated for public comment by the Chair of the meeting. The Economic Development 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 Hewitt called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

3) Roll Call

Present were Commissioners Sierra Davis, Mickey Gillette, Heather Harris, Sheelagh Lapinski, Thomas McCarthy, Christopher Napierski, and Chairman Walter Hewitt. Town Council Liaison Colleen Rix was absent. A quorum was present.

4) Alterations to the Agenda

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to add Item D. under New Business, To consider and act on a motion to hold Commission meetings in-person at Town Council Chambers. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 7-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

5) Remarks from Marcia Vlaun

Chairman Hewitt reported Town Planner Vlaun was attending another meeting and said if possible, she would join the Commission meeting thereafter.

6) Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (3-minute limit)

Chairman Hewitt asked three (3) times for remarks. Chairman Hewitt introduced Serg St. Felix who stated he was interested in Item 8a on the Agenda regarding the Town's development plans. S. St. Felix said he is a licensed realtor and asked how he could help as a mixed-use developer interested party. He reported he purchased 255 New-London Turnpike for commercial/residential use and also said he was interested in 245 New-London Turnpike. Chairman Hewitt asked if he had spoken with Town Planner Vlaun stating she was a wealth of information and also said the Commission had spoken at the last meeting about getting a realtor.

7) To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve:

i) The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 16, 2021.

Motion by Commissioner Gillette; seconded by Commissioner McCarthy to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 16, 2021. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 7-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

8) Unfinished Business

a) Montville real-estate properties for development

Commissioner McCarthy asked Chairman Hewitt if he had contacted realtor, Melissa Giangrasso. Chairman Hewitt said M. Giangrasso is a residential realtor who he was unable to contact and said the Commission was looking into acquiring a commercial realtor. He mentioned information reported by Town Planner Vlaun at the last Commission meeting—1)

the Roc-Ten property as a desirous location regarding the New London wind project and 2) the data center project in Town had been put on hold and/or moving forward again. Commissioner McCarthy asked S. St. Lewis about his plans for 255 New-London Turnpike who said the property is currently a 2-family duplex he plans to modernize and rent to quality tenants to help activity along Route 32 and bring people into Town. S. St. Lewis asked if there was a list of Town properties in need of repair; Chairman Hewitt said Town Planner Vlaun would be the person to speak with about it. He also spoke of a thread on Facebook about the lack of fast-food businesses along Route. 32 with the exception of McDonald's and discussion of ones people are looking for. Chairman Hewitt spoke of efforts to obtain some fast-food places in the past such as Cracker Barrel as well as a traffic study recently proposed by Commissioner Harris. Commissioner McCarthy commented on the 2020 Town Development Plan he obtained from Town Planner Vlaun that identifies projects. Chairman Hewitt spoke of the census data needed for an updated development plan plus a more current traffic study.

Commissioner Davis commented on the three (3) Dunkin Donuts and the two (2) McDonald's on Route 32, asked how they were allowed to locate so close together, and about the lack of healthy food choices in the area. Chairman Hewitt spoke of the Commission as being a recommending body and said businesses cannot be told where to locate unless there is an Town ordinance that addresses it. Commissioner Davis also asked if the Commission could seek out other food places to come do business in Town. Chairman Hewitt said new businesses could be invited and the Commission can help them along the way. He also spoke of the positive aspects of Route 32 with its access to water, sewer, electricity, and gas and said Route 85 is a less easy target. He also said the next plan should have more attempts to enhance structures on Routes 85 and 163. The Commission talked about the need for a mix of commercial and residential use properties with food options so people can stay closer to home and not just for those who travel through Town to go to the casino. Housing needs were also considered to support the expansion at Electric Boat, workforce housing per S. St. Lewis due to the shortage of skilled labor, an outreach opportunity for investors.

Other discussion by the Commission included the expansion and/or a new community center to coincide with potential Town development per Commissioner McCarthy who said the center at Fair Oaks was priority number one in the 2010 Town Plan of Development. Commissioner McCarthy also said the discussion regarding the Community Center should incorporate youths and seniors; he spoke of bonds and/or grants to fund it. The central location of Fair Oaks was said to make it a good site for the center that is also used for transition for intellectually disabled high school graduates as stated by Commissioner Davis. Chairman Hewitt said more information was needed in order to move forward and said it was time to have the Mayor come and speak with Commission to ask how to make the community center a reality. Commissioner Lapinski reported Fair Oaks just received a grant to improve its heating/cooling system and to replace the gymnasium floor.

Commissioner Napierski asked if there is an overall strategy for the 10-year plan stating blight was a concern previously charged to the Commission. He also asked what the Town wants the Commission to do moving forward. Chairman Hewitt spoke of a general outlook for the Town and spoke of the webinar on the New Foreign Trade Zone that encompasses New London County that he and Commissioner McCarthy said they listened to. Potential use for the Roc-Ten property was considered—a warehouse, assembly factory, wind energy—for discussion with Mayor McDaniel and Town Planner Vlaun.

b) New Business Report

Chairman Hewitt commented on the three (3) new businesses reported as of February 2020, two (2) home-based and the other a gas station under construction. Commissioner McCarthy said he was confused about the gas station at Deer Run and Route 85 stating a tenant is still there and there is no visible activity but said a permit may have been issued. Chairman Hewitt said the eviction pause during Covid may be the issue with the tenant.

c) NL Foreign Trade Zone

Chairman Hewitt said foreign trade zone seemed like a good opportunity to attract business to Town, but direction was needed. Potential sites were considered such as the former drive-in for use as manufacturing as proposed by Commissioner McCarthy. The status of this property was discussed.

9) New Business

a) Discuss inviting Mayor to meet with EDC

Chairman Hewitt reported he would invite Mayor McDaniel to the next meeting and would provide him with questions as posed by the Commission. One question would be the desire for additional fast-food restaurants per a Facebook rumor.

b) Facebook thread regarding Route 32 and Fast-Food Restaurants

Chairman Hewitt commented on the Facebook posts concerning the lack of food options in Town with suggestions such as Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken but proposed attracting medium scale restaurants like Red Lobster. Commissioner Davis said franchises are a huge investment and spoke of zoning, so they are not in close proximity of each other. The Commission also talked about charging stations and Chairman Hewitt said why are there none at the casino. Commissioner McCarthy spoke of charging stations by individual landowners versus those on Town-owned properties. Grants, rules and regulations, and credit card use were considered for charging stations. [Commissioner Harris left the meeting at 8:17 p.m. but said she preferred to meet in-person, in reference to Agenda Item 9d.]

c) Nominations for Chair/Co-Chair

Chairman Hewitt stated he had been in the position of chair for a while, but he did not want to be king. He said his term was up in May, but he had not decided if he would run again and asked Commissioner Napierski if he would consider the position. Commissioner Napierski said he felt as the Chair did and would be open to new commissioners to consider the position. The Commission considered options and asked whether the election process and term limits existed. Recording Secretary Gathers was asked the question and said the information could be found in the Town Charter as well as the Commission web page. Commissioner Gillette suggested the information be forwarded for discussion at the next meeting.

d) To consider and act on a motion to hold Commission meetings in-person at Town Council Chambers.

The Commission discussed the motion made earlier by Commissioner McCarthy to begin meeting again in person. Chairman Hewitt spoke his concern regarding safety and his vaccine

status. Commissioner Davis was not reluctant. Commissioner Gillette commented on Public Safety Commission meetings that are held virtually with GoToMeeting and held in Town Council Chambers.

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy; seconded by Commissioner Gillette to hold Commission meetings in-person in Town Council Chambers. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 6-0, all in favor. Motion carried. Chairman Hewitt said he would reserve chambers for the next meeting on April 19th. Recording Secretary Gathers also suggested he contact the IT Director for a call-in number each Commission or Board is assigned.

10) Report from Town Council Liaison

Chairman Hewitt reported Town Council Liaison Rix had asked Town Councilor Pollard to call-in on her behalf as she had to work. Town Councilor Pollard was not present.

11) Remarks from the Public (3-minute limit)

Chairman Hewitt. asked three (3) times for remarks. S. St. Lewis thanked the Commission for allowing him to join the meeting and said he would reach out to Town Planner Vlaun concerning questions he posed to the Commission.

12) Remarks from the Commissioners and Town Council Liaison

Chairman Hewitt said he was looking forward to meeting again in person. Commissioner McCarthy said it will be good to put a face to the voices he has heard.

13) Townspeople and Business Feedback

a) Proposed Recipients for Business Recognition Award

Chairman Hewitt said he should have removed this item from the Agenda but said he will leave it on. Commissioner Gillette spoke of being able to start presenting awards again in late spring or early summer. Chairman Hewitt said the current list of recipients should be reviewed to make sure the businesses are still active. He also responded to Commissioner McCarthy about the history and purpose for the award given monthly to businesses who make a difference, have been in business a long time, are unique, and support the Town. Chairman Hewitt explained there was no set criteria but said the community loves the awards that receive a lot of likes on social media. Commissioner Lapinski proposed presenting the awards quarterly while Commissioner McCarthy suggested annually. Chairman Hewitt also said Town Councilor Rix was tasked with obtaining the plaques.

14) Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Gillette; seconded by Commissioner McCarthy to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 6-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.