

Town of Montville Water & Sewer Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 4, 2022-- 6:00 PM
Town Council Chambers – Town Hall

1. Water and Sewer Commission

a. Call to Order

Chairman Longton called the regular meeting of the Water and Sewer Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

b. Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

c. Roll Call

Present were Commissioners Shawn Jinkerson, Brian Quinn, Town Councilor Andrew Mandler, Anthony Siragusa and Chairman Chuck Longton. A quorum was present.

d. Alterations to the Agenda -- None

e. To consider and act on a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 7, 2022
Motion by Commissioner Mandler; seconded by Commissioner Quinn to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 7, 2022. Discussion: None. Voice vote: 5-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

f. Communications pertaining specifically to matters which concern the Commission

Superintendent Albertson reported on a Covid surveillance via a UConn sampling in March that looks for change in the concentration—February was a little higher than March. He responded to Commission Jinkerson on the ability to trace Covid in wastewater and transmission of it requiring normal precautions per the CDC.

Chairman Longton submitted a copy of his email to Town Attorney Matthew Willis concerning the reconsideration of a motion that failed at the February Commission meeting and reconsidered at the March meeting and the Attorney's response. The Attorney was provided the correspondence (email) with the parliamentarian in addition to copies of the February and March 2022 Commission minutes. Upon his review, Attorney Willis deemed the motion approved by the Commission was valid. Commissioner Jinkerson asked for clarification of the decision provided by Chairman Longton. Mayor McDaniel asked that the opinion be sent to him as Town legal matters are kept on file.

g. Remarks from the Public Regarding Items on the Agenda with a three-minute limit

Chairman Longton asked three (3) times for remarks from the public. There were none.

h. Report from Operations/Administration Division

Superintendent Albertson submitted an Operations/Administrative Report for March 2022 as follows:

1.0 Compliance/Process

1.1 Water Pollution Control Facility

Average daily influent flow was 2.56 mgd with a total treatment volume for March of 80 mg. The monthly average (influent rate) is approximately only 60% of the design level. Typically, the Montville WPCF exhibits more influent during the spring/summer than the winter (20% difference). On average (out of the 16,000 WPCFs in the U.S.) a WPCF is at 81% of design capacity which would indicate a need for re-design, upgrade and/or enhancement for most of these facilities.

Spring's variable temperatures lead to difficulties in process control within the secondary (biological) treatment. Average effluent has been 1.63 mgd indicating an approximate 36%

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recycle rate to Rand-Whitney (purple pipe water supply). Total Nitrogen (TN) loading was discharged in the treated effluent under the state permit limit.

Waste activated sludge (WAS) (produced during secondary process) was thickened to 4% with polymer addition on the gravity belt thickener (GBT). A new injection pump has allowed for better polymer delivery as well as recent renovations to the GBT have assisted in improving WAS dewatering.

1.2 Water Supply

The Montville Water Supply (WS) met required state and federal standards.

The WPCA is starting to pursue collections of unpaid residential water bills from habitual non-payers. Customers that do not respond to requests for payment receive shutoff notices. The number of notices has been increasing (approximately 25 during the last period). A utility's revenue is influenced by its "collection rate", which is the percentage of the amount billed that is actually collected. The WPCF averages a 95% collection rate which is well above the national average.

An initial calculation showed a 3% water loss (from distribution system) which is well below industry standards. A water loss control program helps to identify real or physical losses of water from the water system and apparent losses, the water that is consumed but not accounted for. Real losses represent costs to a water system through the additional energy and chemical usage required to treat the lost water. Apparent losses represent a loss of revenue because the water is consumed but not accounted for and thus not billed. Average water loss in U.S. water distribution systems is approximately 15 percent.

2.0 Staff

2.1 Health and Safety

No injuries, grievances or concerns were reported for staff.

The Town of Montville has been working closely with Uncas Health District to monitor the COVID rates in the region. Cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. appear to be finally trending downward, but a new variant called BA.2 — and nicknamed the "stealth" variant — has experts on alert. This new coronavirus variant appears to be closely related to omicron, which is also called BA.1. Those mutations could be worrisome if they turn out to affect any of three key areas: disease transmission, severity of disease and the variant's ability to evade immunity.

As indicated in this report some initial sampling of the plant's influent indicated very low levels of two more popular variants of the COVID-19 virus indicating that no outbreaks are ongoing within the mostly sewered town. Additional sampling/analysis will be directed at the aforementioned BA.2. Approximately 64% of the town is sewered so the composite influent sampling is a good screening tool to determine whether an outbreak is eminent. One third of the CDC's wastewater sample sites showed a rise in COVID-19 cases.

2.2 Training

Staff continued to receive training to meet CTDEEP and CTDPH requirements for (wastewater/water certification) training credits.

On March 8, a Showa University (Boston, MA) student interviewed the Superintendent about municipal wastewater treatment and recycling.

The Chairman and the Superintendent attended a CCM training event, entitled "Let's Keep It Civil" on March 9. The training appeared to be reactionary to the recent problem at a Cheshire school board meeting related to mask mandates whereas a complete breakdown of civility incurred while Gov. Lamont was present. Control mechanisms were discussed for maintaining civility during municipal meetings.

Representatives from Aqua Solutions were met on March 16 to discuss grinder pumps for potential application in pump stations with known wipe/rag issues.

The Superintendent attended the March 21 WEF *Wastewater Disease Surveillance Summit*.

This year for the March 21 *World Water Day*, many organizations including Save the Sound, The Nature Conservancy, Rivers Alliance, Clean Water Action, Connecticut River Conservancy, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, and other partners are coming together for an online celebration exploring *Groundwater - Making the Invisible Visible*. Many training events will be associated with this event.

Specific SBR (ICEAS) training was provided at the plant by Sanitaire on March 29 by Serdar Umur of GA Fleet Associates. The ICEAS (SBR, continuous flow) training was designed to familiarize the team with the vocabulary, concepts and procedures for operating a successful secondary process system like that found in the Montville WPCF.

Representatives of InfoSense were met on March 30 to discuss their SL-RAT (Sewer Line Rapid Assessment Tool).

The annual membership was renewed for Atlantic States Water & Wastewater Association, an organization that provides training and assistance to the WPCA in both water and wastewater. Several inquiries were made about the unique process stance of the Montville WPCF by outside parties.

2.3 Cybersecurity

The March 22 CTDPH Drinking Water Section circular reported concerns about Russian cyberattacks aimed at Community Water Systems due to the Ukraine conflict and directed CISA to convene a *Broad Stakeholder Call* to potential parties. The Town of Plainfield's computer system suffered a ransomware attack on March 19 disabling the entire municipal system.

Training is ongoing at the plant and from the Town's IT Department about the importance of system integrity. All email access passwords were changed. The WPCA is not networked so each workstation is "stand alone" thus protecting from a virus infection sweep. Double authenticity is required for remote SCADA access now and access password changes. Firewall/DMZ protection has been installed. To better align with recommended best practices, a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) should be created between the SCADA network and external connections. Users will continue to access the facility through a VPN tunnel but instead of passing straight through to the controls network they will be directed to the DMZ. From the DMZ they can then launch the HMI viewing software. This allows the firewall to better control access to the SCADA network, only allowing what is required to the DMZ. Next generation firewalls offer extensive control and visibility of applications allowing the firewall to filter packets at the application level. They also include a path to regularly receive updated threat definitions, keeping them prepared to identify the latest known threats.

3.0 Equipment

3.1 WPCF/Collection System

The recently approved FY 2023 CIP includes the purchase of new equipment (see CIP summary table). Work continues to continually improve process control/performance and ensure aging equipment is cared for or replaced.

The plant sign (located along Pink Row) was repaired after plow damage. The composite sampler refrigerator units were replaced to ensure adequate temperature control (for sample preservation). Chlorine disinfection begins in mid-April so all associated chlorine delivery equipment was tested and cleaned in preparation.

All pump stations were inspected during the month as well as some manhole (post plowing) inspections were made. Pequot PS experienced some electrical issues on March 24; a new MCC will be installed to correct the problem. FOG pumping was conducted and a new grease removal product (liquid emulsifier by OPA Chemicals, Huntington Station, NY) was tried. One pump at the Derry Hill PS was pulled and repaired in March. A grinder pump was replaced at 123 Kitemaug Avenue; the grinder pump management is becoming easier due to the sunset clause.

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CCTV sewer pipe inspections in prioritized areas will continue as the weather improves (due to safety concerns).

3.2 Water Supply

Curb box repairs were conducted at residences along Jerome Avenue (14), Powerhouse Drive (18) and Route 163 (274). A water connection was completed at 45 Maple Avenue. Water disconnection was completed (prior to demolition exercises) on March 17 at 888 Route 32.

4.0 Projects

A summary of existing projects is provided in an attached table. Spring cleaning has begun in earnest with interior work (e.g., floor/wall painting) at the WPCF as well as exterior work at the WPCF/pump stations (e.g., leaf/branch removal).

4.1 WPCF/Collection System/Water Supply

Rand-Whitney had a supply line break on a shut down on March 14 at the intersection of Maple Avenue and Milefski Drive, and a scheduled shut down on March 16. The subsequent startups can cause some significant loading to the plant's influent.

Holzner Construction will complete the CIP project (SBR-4) and Tucker Mechanical will complete the grant diffuser project (SBR-1, 2, 3, 5, and 6). The latest schedule has last material shipping in late March with project start in early April. Contractor personnel were met in second and third weeks of March to conduct coordination planning (concurrent repair operations) for the diffuser replacement along with the gate and valve and pump rail replacement(s).

New laboratory standards were purchased and equipment calibrations were completed in March after an internal review of laboratory procedures by the Lab Director. A new camera and viewing screen were purchased for the microscope in the laboratory. The viewer is used for biological examinations with staff to ensure target organisms are present in the secondary process.

COVID influent surveillance is ongoing with particular attention aimed at identifying the new variant identified recently in China (BA.2 strain). The sampling/analysis is part of the CDC's *National Wastewater Surveillance System's* DCIPHER platform.

Grit chamber construction is being delayed by supply concerns (i.e., grit chamber) with completion now pushed off till June. MCA and staff met on March 10.

Rand-Whitney is modifying their existing permit for discharge from the paperboard facility. A larger concentration of BOD/TSS could be present if the new permit is approved. Their loading to the WPCF has steadily increased: 9,677 lbs/d (1996-2000) to 11,300 lbs/d (July to October 2008) to 15,303 lbs/d (July to September 2021). Rand-Whitney personnel were met on March 18 to discuss their preparation for the permit filing with the CTDEEP. The WPCA Engineer (Chris Pierce of Wright-Pierce) was met on March 21 to determine our concerns with their proposed (additional) loading to the WPCF. Their loading cannot overload nor impair the ability of the facility to treat wastewater to prescribed (effluent) limits.

A retaining wall for control slope creep adjacent to the fuel cell was completed on March 23.

The capacity, management, operations, and maintenance (CMOM) program was initiated three years ago when the current Superintendent began work at the WPCF. The team has moved successfully from reactive to more proactive operation and maintenance (O&M); the CMOM response is in the foundation mode; that is, some area-wide and hot-spot cleaning will be completed followed by CCTV inspection, FOG inspections, and GIS mapping enhancement. The collection system will be investigated further now that the weather is improving (along with more daylight hours). Eventually, we are anticipating moving one operator into the collections role. Work continued on the *FY 2022 Sanitary Sewer Easement Improvements* and included discussions with (former Town Attorney) Richard Cody, Esquire on February 15. An updated scope of work will be completed based on the legal opinion. Then, a CTDEEP pre-application meeting will be scheduled to discuss the Wright-Pierce preliminary design report.

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Status meetings were held with the CTDPH/WPCA Engineer to discuss the Cook Water Tower Project schedule and costs. Kickoff meetings were held in March with Wright-Pierce personnel. The engineering report will be completed and reviewed by the CTDPH prior to construction. An unfiled easement map was located for access to the proposed water tower location. Geotechnical soil/bedrock (drilling/coring) operations (including SPD and RQD) occurred on March 11.

CAI personnel were met on March 18 to discuss the steps required to improve the GIS mapping of the water supply. Specifically, the initial digitizing will incorporate the existing water supply map from Nathan L. Jacobson & Associates followed by improvements by the water operators for recent additions, valve and meter locations. With additional field measurements, the mapping will be an accurate representation of all assets with the system. GIS goals include the minimization of flood risk, decrease asset failure, lower energy usage, and reduced cyber threats.

4.2 Regulatory Oversight

No regulatory oversight or action is ongoing for the WPCA. No existing Consent Decrees or Consent Orders currently exist.

Water professionals were alerted about slow paying customers and recent legislation (Raised Bill No. 128- *An Act Concerning Foreclosure, Assignment and Other Enforcement Actions for Unpaid Sewer Assessments and Other Fees and Charges*). The proposed law is regarding significant slow payment and potential formal notifications.

5.0 Development

The sewer and water connection plans proposed for Wilton's Way (22-unit condominium development, 245 Route 32) were reviewed by staff and the WPCA Engineer (Wright-Pierce). Communication of findings was provided to the Planner. Some additional single family development was initiated along Webb Drive (31) and Moxley Drive (19). A water connection was made at 45 Maple Avenue. A real estate agent made inquiries about sewer and water availability along Brewer Street. Confirmation of the disconnection was made by staff of 888 Route 32 prior to the proposed demolition activities.

6.0 Finances

The WPCA operates with an *Enterprise Fund*. The FY 2022 WPCA Sewer and Water Budgets begin on July 1 of each year. As indicated in last month's report, the financial condition of both water and wastewater accounts are considered "healthy."

Proposed FY 2023 wastewater and water budgets (as well as proposed CIPs) are provided in the attachments and reflect an increase in expected revenues due to the end of the worldwide pandemic. Additionally, there is an expected high revenue accumulation for this fiscal year which likely will be improved in the coming cycle. Rand-Whitney's continued expansion will boost their sewer/recycle water billing. Some concerns exist for costs of energy and fuel as indicated in the markets.

A summary table of Groton Utilities (GU) water (supplied to the Town) was made to examine the effect of COVID on amount purchased. It appears that an approximate 25% drop in water purchased was observed in 2020 and 2021 after the pandemic began subsequently having a negative effect on WS revenues. Additionally, a non-revenue water percentage was calculated for the WS indicating a low volume of water (due to bleeding and flushing lines) that is not billed for.

6.1 Accounts Review

Current rates (and ancillary fees) appear to be adequate at this time to cover costs for water and wastewater activities. The WPCA accounts were reviewed as part of the town audit. The Accountant discussed results with Nikoleta McTigue, CPA (Principal, CLA, LLP). The draft Town Audit was received on March 1; no concerns were raised about the water and sewer accounts.

An inventory of payments for gasoline (WEX Fleet Cards) was made; FY 2022 Running Average: \$1,483 per month which includes fuel for vehicles and emergency generators) compared to February 2022 (\$1,147). The rising cost of gasoline and higher frequency of significant storm events will likely factor into future budgeting.

6.2 Assets

When it comes to capital planning, utilities struggle to keep up with the future. Scenarios like ever changing regulatory requirements, weather conditions, population models, emerging contaminants, and advances in treatment technology are difficult to plan for. However, funds in the water and sewer accounts are considered adequate and have now been reserved for capital improvement in a 5-year projection. GAAP indicates that all reserves should be allocated for the 5-year capital improvement except for 90 days of O & M (Sewer= \$1.6 million/Water= \$480,000). Some bonds, grants and proposed pandemic relief funds will be considered for current and future asset financing. The FY 2023 CIP was completed and approved by the WPCA on March 7. A summary of the proposed CIP for the coming fiscal year was provided. A draft 5-year CIP is provided from FY 2022 onward.

6.3 Grants/Funding

Through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) the U.S. Department of Treasury is providing over \$350 billion in funding to state and local governments nationwide. The \$1 trillion jobs act will provide \$55 billion for drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. Some money will be invested in the state revolving funds. The *Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds* provide a substantial infusion of resources to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and provide the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery. These funds provide substantial flexibility for each government to meet their local and regional needs--including response efforts to continue to decrease the spread of the virus and making necessary investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

Some current wastewater projects are funded by State funds including two bonds and one grant (CTDEEP \$5 million *Grant-in-Aid for Sewage Treatment Facility Infrastructure Improvements and Upgrades at the Montville WPTF--State Grant Agreement 2017-170491*, approved via March 2014 Town of Montville Resolution No. 2014-25). The bonds were for infrastructure improvements within the plant including the new chlorine system, new recycling pumps, and grit removal system. Additionally, the aeration systems for SBR-1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 will be replaced. The Mayor requested an extension for the Grant (due to expire in June 2021). On June 1, the Mayor was notified that the extension has been drafted and routed for all the signatures of approval from CTDEEP. Wright-Pierce (Town Engineer) has made an additional extension request specific to the SBR diffuser improvements due to material delivery delays. Patricia Reily (CTDEEP) reported on January 20 that due to supply issues, an even longer extension will be provided for the grant projects. A review of grant monies indicated adequate funding for the proposed projects with approximately \$200,000 margin.

Based on a review of the WPCA's *Eligibility Application*, the CTDPH DWS had determined that the Cook Water Tower replacement project was ready to proceed and that DWSRF funding will be available. In a January 12 *Circular Letter*, the CTDPH DWS provided information about drinking water infrastructure funding directed through DWSRF programs over the next five years from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (BIL) a/k/a the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA). The possibility of using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to help offset the design costs of this project is a possibility. The project is a result of an emergency situation which would allow the municipality/utility to direct award design services or the municipality/utility selects its consultant via a Qualifications Based Selection process (QBS). The Finance Director was met on February 9 to discuss the status of the Montville WS and the revolving fund.

On February 18, the USEPA announced \$20 million in available grant funding to assist communities and schools with removing sources of lead in drinking water. The grant funding, and additional funding through the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*, will help make rapid progress on the goal of addressing lead and removing lead pipes across the country. Money is available for remediating lead pipes in homes.

6.4 Energy

Electrical energy is supplied to the plant by the fuel cell, Eversource (transmission), and *First Point Power* (generation). The power generation was formerly supplied by *Constellation Energy*. SARRACCO Mechanical supplied a maintenance work contract in February.

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The Doosan *PureCell Model 400* Fuel Cell unit began producing power in June 2020 resulting in a large drop in grid power demand (up to 75%). The onsite generation has led to significant savings by reducing the transmission costs because most of the power used is generated onsite. A cursory review of billing showed an approximate \$20,000 in savings. An evaluation is being made to determine if a suitable tank could be used onsite to guarantee fuel to the fuel cell in the event there is a supply interruption.

Adam Teff of TitanGen was met on February 10 to discuss solar panel installations for further onsite energy development. The cost numbers were reviewed (based on the WPCA's current cost) and the offered PPA (solar) price. The proposed savings are reportedly strong (see attached summary table).

Superintendent Albertson summarized his monthly report--wastewater process control is improving; a report received from the Long Island DEP deemed the Plant one of the best performing in the State in 2021; the Town Audit is ongoing with no concerns; of the draft 2022-2023 budgets and CIPs presented at the March 7 Commission meeting, the water budget has been presented to the Town Council for approval; and the projected 5-year capital funds are, water \$11.5 million and sewer \$750,000. Superintendent Albertson responded to questions from Commissioner Siragusa concerning a Rand-Whitney supply line break and the status for replacement of the distribution boxes; to Commissioner Jinkerson regarding the offline status of the grit chamber for which grant funds were approved to resume the project that is delayed until August. Mayor McDaniel suggested a tour of the Plant by the Commission. Commissioner Quinn questioned the need for a 5-year projection; Commissioner Siragusa responded per CMOM one should be in place although it may be subject to change.

i. Report from Mayor.

Mayor McDaniel reported the audit delay was the result of personnel changes stating the Town has only one (1) bidder for audit services. The CIP is supposed to be a 5-year plan for equipment and future growth of the community as the reason the request by Commissioner Siragusa.

j. Report from Engineers

Superintendent Albertson reported the engineering summary and narrative were included in the meeting packet.

k. Old Business -- None

l. New Business

1. Executive Session for Personnel Discussion to include Mayor and WPCA.

Motion by Commissioner Mandler; seconded by Commissioner Jinkerson for an Executive Session for Personnel Discussion to include the Mayor and WPCA. Discussion: Commissioner Jinkerson referenced a 3-1 vote at the May 2021 Commission meeting when the position for WPCA Administrator was approved based on last year's budget. The upcoming 2022-2023 budget has been sent to the Town Council but does not include the \$97,000 for the Administrator position approved last year. Commissioner Quinn stated the matter is a financial question and not personnel related; Commissioner Mandler concurred and asked why the position is advocated this year if funds are not appropriated. Mayor McDaniel responded the position is only partially funded for part of the year and does not know if the position still exists as authorization to go out to bid only garnered one call. He spoke to the toll being taken on Superintendent Albertson, himself, the Finance Director, and the Assistant to Human Resources for operation of the WPCA and its disfunction for the last six (6) years. The job of Superintendent involves infrastructure, plant improvements, and having shovel-ready projects with an engineering plan in place; specifically, the science of the plant. Commissioner Jinkerson refuted the disfunction of the Department stating it has not been for the past four (4) years. He referenced payment enforcement, audits, painful policy decisions, and recognized the efforts of the Commission instituting change. Commissioner Mandler inquired if funds were available for the position and whether a vote is needed. Commissioner Quinn asked if the position is filled whether the Department will be overbudget. Commissioner Siragusa remarked funds are sufficient and resolved by a transfer of line item funds.

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Mayor McDaniel said there is up to hire 15% left and for negotiation purposes the top line for the position is \$95,000; the Commission would undertake interviews, and then funds could still be appropriated. The position is advertised and is scheduled to close on April 15, 2022. Roll Call vote: *In favor*: none. Opposed: Commissioner Jinkerson, Longton, Mandler, Quinn, and Siragusa. 0-5 vote. Motion failed.

m. Reports/Referral from Planning & Zoning

Superintendent Albertson reported developments are going on with direct contacts being made to the WPCA. The Town Planner does very well with follow-up on proposed projects.

II. Water Commission

a. Report from Engineers

Superintendent Albertson reported on a preliminary class of lost water that you do not make money on. The average rate is 15%; the Town water loss is 3% attributed to having a tight system that is better at metering and monitoring. Commissioner Siragusa asked about hooking up to Norwich water and the purpose for the Cook Water Tower; Superintendent Albertson said it is possible to connect with Norwich given the interconnection agreement and spoke of water limits for infrastructure and fire suppression.

b. Old Business -- *None*

c. New Business -- *None*

d. Remarks from the Public

Chairman Longton asked three (3) times for remarks from the public. There were none.

e. Remarks from Commission Members

Commissioner Mandler thanked everyone for providing answers to his questions so he can learn. Commissioner Jinkerson apologized for his emotions to Mayor McDaniel. Commissioner Mandler suggested getting in touch with Town Councilor Tim May for feedback on Commission matters. Chairman Longton appreciated the questions of the commissioners and their dedication to doing a job right for the ratepayers. Mayor McDaniel remarked he did not take comments personally nor the back and forth of politics. Superintendent Albertson remarked on a 95% collection rate in Town; other towns are much lower. He is appreciative of Town departments taking up the slack and having been here 3 ½ years and thanked the Mayor, Town Council, and Commission as being one of the best in the State. Superintendent Albertson added the Commission does not get appreciated for that it does.

f. Adjournment

Motion by Chairman Longton; seconded by Commissioner Quinn to adjourn the meeting at 6:48 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote: 5-0, 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.**