

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Parks & Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting – March 15, 2023 -- 6:30 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

This was an informational meeting; a quorum was not present.

Comments will only be accepted at times designated for public comments by the Chair of the meeting. The Montville Town Council Rules of Procedure, decorum, timeliness, and suitability shall be followed and enforced.

1. Call to order.

Chairperson Southard began the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. Roll Call.

Present were Commissioners Noah Carver, Kate Southard, and Rocky Stone. Absent were Commissioners Matt Beaupre, Jon Chase, Kevin Clang, Denise Gladue, Morgan Matthewson, and Deborah Schober. A quorum was not present.

Also present was Recreation Director Peter Bushway, Town Council Liaison Lenny Bunnell was absent from the meeting due to a conflicting engagement.

4. Adjustments to the Agenda. – *No action*

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

Chairperson Southard asked three (3) times for remarks. Kelley Orbe of 1459 Route 163, Oakdale, is the manager of the Montville Farmers Market who remarked in opposition to having the Summer Concert Series or Music Festival follow the Farmers Market on Tuesdays nights. Her letter was read into and is attached as an Addendum to these minutes and specifically addresses safety, demographics i.e., traffic, conflicting attendance for the event, and the livelihoods of the market vendors.

Flo Kumpf of 204 Route 163, Uncasville, remarked she sits on the Farmers Market Committee and is the first to arrive and the last to leave on the Tuesday event. She helps with the setup and breakdown of tables and equipment of the market vendors and although she does not live far away she is never home before 8 p.m. Having the music festival on Tuesdays following the Market is not a good idea.

Bob Collins of 1403, Route 163, Oakdale remarked he and his wife have attended the Market since its start. It is wonderful to see the support and excitement for this community event

seeing and meeting neighbors. There would be a lot less confusion if the music festival was on another a night, a Friday or Saturday, but is glad to see the Montville is progressing.

Caitlin Casper of 72 Park Avenue, Uncasville moved here from Washington state last year with her husband who is in the military. She thinks the festival should be on another day other than the Market. Her husband has to get up early so neither of them would be able to attend a music festival after the Market and it should not have community participation taken from them.

Brianna Tobey of 27 Georgia Road, Oakdale has been a vendor for six (6) years and remarked safety at the Farmers Market is a major concern with trucks leaving the venue. Her dad is 70 years old and does drive and she would like to attend the music festival on another night.

Tim Gray of 82 Jerome Road, Uncasville remarked on the rush that would occur for vendors to depart the stage should the music festival be held on the same night as the Market.

Phyllis Freeman of 456 Oxoboxo Dam Road, Montville lives on the road where the Market takes place. She remarked that having the music festival on the same night as the Market would cause a lot of traffic.

6. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve.

- a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of January 18, 2023.
- b. The Regular Meeting of February 15, 2023.

These items were tabled to the next meeting.

7. Recreation Director's Report March 2023.

Director Bushway reported the fencing around on the second set of courts is being removed for installation of the new tennis courts/pickleball courts scheduled to be finished in May. He also reported on the upcoming Easter Egg Hunts on April 1 and on the upgrade to the Community Center alarm/access system to occur over the spring vacation. Those who access the Center will be notified of the same. Applications for summer camp volunteers are available; the installation of the new playground is dependent upon shipment of equipment from Texas for installation by mid-April.

8. Report from Finance.

Director Bushway reported nothing out of the ordinary has occurred and that a new person has been hired for the accounts payable position in Finance bringing the department back to full staff status.

9. March Newsletter. *(Correction noted by Director Bushway as "April" Newsletter, although not amended due to lack of a quorum.)*

Director Bushway reported he would forward the April newsletter to the Commission once completed.

10. Parks and Facilities

Commissioner Stone reported he and Chairman Southard attended the recent Public Works meeting with updated on the facilities repair items list—doors are on order and this month one of the beams for the pillars arrived.

11. Unfinished Business.

a. Montville Carnival 2023

Chairperson Southard reported the Carnival Committee held a meeting and plans are progressing for more entertainment for Sundays; the contract with the carnival company has been signed per Commissioner Stone. More vendors are being sought and a meeting will be held with the carnival company to fix issues regarding the Ferris wheel and offering fried dough by vendors. Fireworks will be held.

b. Tennis Court Update

Chairman Southard noted this item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

c. Summer Concert Series

Director Bushway reported concerts will be scheduled for Friday and Saturday and once determined will be announced.

d. Farmers Market 2023

Chairperson Southard reported the first official meeting a few weeks ago and it involved a lot of communication. Thanks were given to those who came out this evening in support. Vendors are being approved; a schedule is being set with the opening day as May 13, 2023.

e. Youth Sports MOAs

Chairman Southard remarked this item was discussed at last month's meeting; Commissioner Stone noted assistance was needed from Town Councilor Bunnell concerning the parking issue for potential regulations. Town Councilor Bunnell referenced parking restrictions at the Stop & Shop that are by ordinance and unloading for the fire zone. He noted there is no signage at the sports field and signs must be posted to direct and restrict traffic. If the police are called, specific rules must be followed but not actual parking. Reemphasized was signage and requested police presence to control chaos.

12. New Business -- *None*

13. Communications. -- *None*

14. Remarks from the Public of Non-Agenda items (3-minute limit).

Chairperson Southard asked three (3) times for remarks. Troy Hannon of 95 Norwich-New London Turnpike remarked about obtaining a skateboard park in Town as in area towns but was not sure how to move the idea along.

15. Remarks from Town Council Liaison Bunnell.

Town Councilor Bunnell remarked he would make himself available for wording of the MOA. He noted the Farmers Market is a success and important given the time spent by residents to speak on it and stated he did not consider the logistics of setup/breakdown of the market.

16. Remarks from Parks & Recreation Director Bushway.

Director Bushway remarked he spoke with Bill Bauer regarding the music series and it was noted bands need two (2) hours beforehand for setup to play/perform. Thus, having the series midweek after the Farmers Market was not going to work. Additionally, weekends are busy and often rented out. Monday and Wednesday are potential days but Friday is not a good night for bands who can charge more performing elsewhere.

17. Remarks from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Stone thanked supporters of the Farmers Market for expressing their concerns. Commissioner Carver echoed Commissioner Stone's comments and appreciated the thoughts by the Farmers Market supporters. Chairman Southard remarked the Farmers Market is her parttime during the summer but said the Town would be happy to have another event, the music series.

18. Adjournment.

The meeting ended at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Gloria J. Gathers

Town of Montville -- Recording Secretary/Minutes Clerk

**AN AUDIO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE ON
THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE WEBSITE.**

ADDENDUM TO MINUTES: Letter from Kelly Orbe regarding the music festival.

I am the Manager of the Montville Farmers Market and I am here to speak on behalf of the market regarding the music festival proposed to be held Tuesday nights after the farmers market.

The market has grown significantly over the last couple of years due to the unwavering efforts of its committee members. We have dedicated much of our free time as well as some personal funds to create a fun, safe and economically beneficial environment for small business owners and the people of Montville. Our success has been purely due to this hard work.

At our first meeting, March 6th, the committee was made aware of the proposed festival and all voted unanimously “NO”. We all shared the same opinion based on factors that we decided would negatively affect the market and our town.

Those deciding factors are as follows

1. Safety

The market starts at 4pm and ends at 7pm. Vendors (who park across the street in the adjacent lot during extremely busy markets), leave their belongings and drive their cars back to their tables. Otherwise, they have cars parked next to their tables during open-market hours. Many vendors have elaborate set ups that take between an hour to two hours to set up and sometimes an hour or more to take down. They need vehicles close at hand due to heavy tents and other materials.

A committee member always stays until the last vendor leaves which is often not until 8:00. It is written in our rules and regulations that vendors cannot leave until close of market, at 7:00 pm. This is because we have found that a vendor leaving early puts the children present and other customers at risk of being hurt by a moving vehicle. This is NOT a far cry from reality as MY OWN CHILDREN have been put in danger from vendors leaving early. That is why we EXPRESSLY put it in the rules that you are required to stay until market close. Vendors are reminded of this rule OFTEN.

It is also not an option to make vendors carry materials distances. It puts a strain on them and they likely would not sign up for following seasons or even finish the current season. The earliest another event could occur without safety concerns would be 8 pm.

2. Demographic

It is thought that the music festival would benefit from a source of traffic readily available, as market customers may stay to enjoy a concert. However, this most likely is not the case. We have found, after operating the market for many years, that the demographic is generally young families and older adults. On a Tuesday, families like to get home to get children to bed and get ready for work on a Wednesday morning. The older generation may want to stay, but many like to get home and do not drive in the dark. They enjoy the quiet acoustic music of the market, and generally need to go home to put groceries or other purchased items away. A festival directly after would deter customers, who *are* interested in staying, from buying from vendors so they do not have to worry about traveling home to put them away first. My farm sells frozen products and customers generally stop at our booth last in order to get out right away and put meat in the freezer at home.

For the demographic that *does* want to come to a music festival, they generally get there early to get a good spot, setting up blankets and chairs. This would disturb the flow of the market, which is important for vendor sales. It also would cause safety problems at market close. Refer to my points on safety.

3. Why put two events on one night?

Not everyone can attend the market because Tuesdays do not work for them. Not only that, but a late concert during a weekday is difficult for people to attend. Esker Point in Groton has a popular music festival that is from 6-8. People often get there to set up an hour or two early. Again, refer to my points on safety as to why this is a huge concern.

Holding this music event on a different weeknight would also give the town multiple opportunities to provide entertainment and growth. Holding it on another night and earlier would benefit everyone. Moving the farmers market is NOT an option. Vendors have already signed contracts and paid for their spots on Tuesday 4-7pm at 75 Oxoboxo Dam Rd. These are businesses, and will not likely participate if location and times are changed.

As a vendor, I cannot attend every market. Some overlap. We attended the Groton winter market this year because it is held on Saturdays while their summer market is on Tuesdays. During our brief time there we were blown away by the love and respect for the market the town

and community have shown. The Mayor even attends, making a point to talk to all vendors, and even does a Facebook live introducing everyone. The mayor's wife even bought one of our beef briskets to make St. Patrick's Day corned beef (which they went directly home after to put it in the freezer!). The Groton summer market has seen just as much success and is even busier than the winter one. They occupy the same time slot as the Montville Farmers Market and it has not impeded our success in any way...showing that similar events in different towns can happen at the same time and still be successful. Therefore, having a music festival on the same night as another town's festival does not matter. There are enough people that want to attend that would rather stay close to home.

In Closing, with a dedicated and hard-working committee, like the Farmers Market Committee, the music festival would see success for many years to come. Please do not jeopardize the Farmer market's hard work to provide our town with economic growth in a safe and family fun environment by putting a music festival directly following our event. Please consider holding the music festival on another night. No doubt, I and my many friends and family would love to attend, on A DIFFERENT NIGHT.

Thank you,

Kelley Orbe
Manager
Montville Farmer's Market

