

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes – November 20, 2023 – 6:00 p.m.

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

1) Call to Order

Chairperson Gillette called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

3) Roll Call

Present were Chairperson Mickey Gillette, Commissioners Sierra Davis, Christopher Napierski, Walter Hewitt (by phone), and Alternate Serg St. Felix (6:07 p.m.). Commissioners Meracus Hernandez and Sheelagh Lapinski were absent.

Also, present were Assistant Planner Meredith Badaluca, Consultant Robert Santy, Town Council Liaison Steve Lathrop, and Mayor Lenny Bunnell (6:05 p.m.).

4) Alterations to the Agenda -- *None*

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

Chairperson Gillette asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

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

a) The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 16, 2023.

Motion by Commissioner Davis; seconded by Commissioner Napierski to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 16, 2023. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor.
Motion carried.

7) Unfinished Business

a) Review of Business Report.

Chairman Gillette remarked there are five (5) new businesses for the month of October.

b) Discussion of status of New Business Introductory Letter.

Assistant Planner Badaluca reported that a copy of revised new business introductory letter and the EDC brochure will be emailed to the Commission tomorrow morning. A question regarding contacts in Town for new businesses was discussed. Assistant Planner Badaluca remarked that former Assistant Planner Benzanson was working on the link updates. She will check on the links to make sure the information is correct. She also confirmed that her office can respond with a letter if contacted for feedback.

c) Discussion of Presentation of Excellence Award policies and presentations.

Consultant Santy reported he was ready to connect with IT to see how to make the Excellence Award and Business Spotlight policies work. Per Commissioner Napierski, time was a factor in the past to get things done. Assistant Planner Badalucca remarked she can work with Consultant Santy and IT to smooth the transition. Consultant Santy touched on the differences between Agenda Items 7c and 7d as he discussed last month. Town Councilor Lathrop inquired about the traffic of the EDC website which should be trackable. The EDC Facebook page was also mentioned. Commissioner Davis relayed she was given access to that site but was told not to post on it since it is a Town entity and thus it only has the authority to post to it. Town Councilor Lathrop works for a nonprofit organization and suggested taking pictures of the business owners for the Spotlight and using Route 32, “restaurant row” to help draw people to the Town.

d. Discussion of Business Spotlight policies.

See Agenda Item 7c.

8) New Business:

a) Update – Montville EDC Support Services Consultant, Robert W. Santy.

Consultant Santy reported on the 2-hour training seminar scheduled for January 29, 2024, with the leadership of the Town about economic development at 6:00 p.m.. The seminar will be a joint meeting of the Town leadership and the Commission to take a look at the Town, its needs, local businesses and future opportunities. Taking a look at a local New London County municipality and comparing it to Montville is also an option. Consultant Santy noted Montville is 45 square miles with villages on its outskirts—what is it and where do we want it to go. Comparing the Town size, population, and economics will make it easier to set priorities. He reported the community scan is basically complete and a draft of the report has been started and will be outlined to discern what was learned about the Town and recommendations for it. Assistant Planner Badalucca reported that the January 17, 2024, EDC meeting will be cancelled and refreshments for the seminar will be cookies as the budget will not allow for a dinner.

Per a question from Town Councilor Lathrop, Consultant Santy explained the process of economic developments. He remarked some towns are against it, how its done, what is in its way, and can changes be made. It is welcomed in Montville with a lot of support for it. Route 32 could be better by reviewing the structures by assessing how do they and can they work. With the structures of the EDC and planning and zoning the EDC can bring projects to Town. Mayor Bunnell remarked there are some poverty projects but no actual development project. Alternate St. Feliz remarked about Pink Row and its request for tax relief but said it would help people in needs of homes to fill a need. Consultant Santy remarked that tax abatements are said to be unaffordable by some due to lost tax revenue.

b) Staff projects updates.

Assistant Planner Badalucca remarked on current Town development projects that include the following: (1) a 2-lot subdivision at 958 Route 163, (2) an existing gateway terminal for use to transload marine materials at 125 Depot Road, and (3) a proposal for the 225 Maple Avenue Animal Control Facility site plan. She also reported on a Ledyard project at 1737 Route 12 in Gales Ferry, Dow Chemical, concerning a rock cutting project with a 10-year span that Director Burdick will review. At the request of Town Councilor Lathrop, Assistant Planner

Badaluca will show him how to get online to review applications for planning & zoning, inland/wetlands and zoning.

c) Meeting dates for 2024

Motion by Commissioner Davi; seconded by Commissioner Napierski to approve the 2024 Commission Meeting Dates. Discussion: It was noted by Chairman Gillette that the January 17, 2024, meeting will be cancelled and a special meeting held on January 29, 2024. Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor. **Motion carried.** Commissioner Davis noted she has not been receiving emails; Assistant Planner Badaluca will check on it.

d) Election of Officers

Motion by Commissioner Napierski; seconded by Commissioner to nominate and retain Mickey Gillette as Chair. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 4-0-1, Chairman Gillette abstained. **Motion carried.**

Motion by Commissioner Davis; seconded by Chairman Gillette to nominate and appoint Serg St. Felix as Vice-Chair. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor. **Motion carried.**

9) Report from Town Council Liaison

Town Councilor Lathrop had little to relay but remarked he was honored to be here and was looking forward to the next two years. He shared some background information about himself to the Commission.

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

Chairperson Gillette asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

11) Remarks from the Commissioners and Town Council Liaison. -- *None*

Mayor Bunnell, newly elected, remarked he had no solutions but would support the Commission by attending as many meetings as he can. He also remarked that the Town is not divided nor is it together but there is an answer for the same—elimination of the zip codes. The Mayor referenced the mills that were businesses in Montville. He also addressed the lack of any real authority by EDC but noted the Commission can attend planning and zoning meetings and make motions to support and be present to speak in favor of projects. It can also seek out and meet businesses to ask them about their concerns. Lastly, Mayor Bunnell remarked his office is open for communication. Commissioner St. Feliz referenced a \$11.7 million grant for municipalities and asked has the Town mentioned the walkability of Route 32. Assistant Planner Badaluca remarked that Director Burdick wanted this extended to the SCOG. The Department applies and seeks out grants but Route 32 must be addressed through the DOT. She will also mention the suggestion made by Commissioner St. Feliz to Director Burdick.

12) Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Davis; seconded by Chairman Gillette to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m. Voice vote: 4-0-0, all in favor. **Meeting adjourned.**