

**TOWN OF MONTVILLE**  
**Economic Development Commission**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes – February 21, 2024 – 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.**

***The meeting was informational; a quorum was not present.***

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 (by phone), Vice-Chairperson Serg St. Felix, and Commissioner Sheelagh Lapinski. Commissioners Sierra Davis, Meracus Hernandez, Walter Hewitt, and Christopher Napierski were absent.

Also, present were Assistant Planner Meredith Badalucca, Mayor Lenny Bunnell and Consultant Robert Santy. Town Council Liaison Kevin Lathrop was absent. Mayor Bunnell left the meeting at 6:18 p.m. John Desjardins from the Planning and Zoning Committee was also present.

4) Alterations to the Agenda – ***No action***

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

Chairperson Gillette asked three (3) times for remarks. Mayor Bunnell remarked that an offer was made on Monday to Matthew Davis for the vacant Director of Land Use and Development position. Director Davis will begin the job on March 4 and the Mayor who described him as promising expressed optimism for him in this Town. He also reported that an RFP was sent out for a consultant and the draft can be sent on to the Commission.

6) Minutes

- a) To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve the Minutes of the December 18, 2023 Regular Meeting. ***No action***
- b) To Consider and Act on Motion to approve the Minutes of the January 29, 2024 Special Meeting. ***No action***

7) Unfinished Business

- a) Review of Business Report.

Per the Business Report for January 2024, a café made a name change, another business is being used for office space, the other is a sandwich shop. Two are home-based businesses— an advertising agency and a limo service.

b) Discussion of Business Excellence Award.

Consultant Santy remarked that the Excellence Award has reached a plateau and the question now is how does the Commission want to move forward. (This update was provided under Item 8a.)

c) Discussion of Business Spotlight

Consultant Santy mentioned the application process through the Town's website for the Business Spotlight. Assistant Planner Badalucca reported that IT deemed the project to be labor intensive. Mayor Bunnell urged the Commission to contact the Town Attorney regarding the same; Chairperson Gillette concurred. The Mayor requested that Consultant Santy send him a description of the application that he will take to the Town Attorney. Assistant Planner Badalucca noted the application form was approved by the Commission and referenced that Salem lists its businesses in a booklet. Other promotional business ideas were discussed as follows:

- Chairperson Gillette remarked on having rented the Mohegan Firehouse attended by realtors for people interested in starting businesses to get information. Groton is having one and it is a concept he wants to continue. Commissioner Hewitt was a good promoter of the idea but the Commission budget is limited.
- Assistant Planner Badalucca reported on a small business seminar held by the Town of Salem.
- Commissioner Lapinski reported on the Passport to Norwich that limited participants to three (3) visits to a participating business to spend money. A stamp booklet was used to monitor the business visits. Businesses contributed to that initiative.
- Assistant Planner Badalucca reported on her intention to attend the Norwich Chamber of Commerce on February 27. Chairperson Gillette expressed interest in attending; Vice-Chair St. Feliz remarked on attending a breakfast there. The Assistant Planner also reported the Salem business directory includes ads and she plans to reach out to their EDC.

(This update was provided under Item 8a.)

8) New Business:

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

Consultant Santy referenced two (2) PowerPoint slides from the EDC seminar held on January 29, specifically, "A Quick Audience Survey at Fundamentals of Economic Development Presentation" and "Responsibilities of EDC and Staff." He reviewed these documents with the Commission. Assistant Planner Badalucca will also email these documents to the Commission. Consultant Santy remarked on what an EDC can do but stated it must identify what it is and what it wants to do. Looking at developable property in the Town with help from a reliable source, acquiring funds for affordable housing, and a plan of development with the five (5) top items the EDC wants to accomplish were benchmarks that he referenced. The Consultant reported he has to finalize his report having met with nine (9) community members to get a scan of what is going on in the Town. Consultant Santy also remarked on the deficiencies of the EDC that include its inability to testify in front of boards and commissions nor does it have a charter so its responsibilities are undefined. He proposed having the Commission review other area chambers of commerce and seCTer stating one member of the Commission should attend these meetings. Recognizing the assets of the Town that is on a 6-mile corridor from New London to Norwich and what the EDC is doing to promote them was

mentioned—it can be achieved with strategic marketing. Commissioner Lapinski remarked on the need for another dispensary in Town. Funds from it, \$25,000, goes to the schools but the dispensary in Norwich is cutting into that profit. She promoted contact with Infinity Grow that offers community benefits—one in Portland does not have edibles; one in New Haven has edibles; food and vegetables. She also mentioned a cannabis expo that is being held at the casino this weekend.

b) Staff projects updates.

Assistant Planner Badalucca responded to Vice-Chairperson St. Feliz about activity on Routes 32 and 163. She also reported that the drive-in property at 1080 Route 32 was sold and the property is being cleaned up but there are no plans for it as of yet. The owner is local and excited. The Assistant Planner noted that former Planner Vlaun started in 2015 with making the property viable and kept working at it. She also reported on a plan for a 4-unit, multi-family dwelling at 26 Plato Drive. The Vice-Chairman asked whether calls are received about Town properties; the Assistant Planner reported calls are received daily regarding development of existing properties.

c) Discussion concerning Dispensary Facilities, Hybrid Retailers and Retailers as requested by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Assistant Planner Badalucca remarked the Planning and Zoning Commission is seeking input from the EDC and Town Council concerning dispensary facilities et al. She reported she has done a lot of research for that Commission on these topics including insurance and security for example as the Town is trying to write regulations to support these businesses. The Assistant Planner also reported these are cash businesses, for which financing is not available, but licensing is required by the State and insurance of \$1 million. The distance of these locations from schools and day care are also a factor. Feedback is being sought from the EDC regarding retailers—currently there is a moratorium in Town so no business can locate here at this time. Mentioned was a big cultivation located in Colchester. If regulations are defined anyone can do business in Town as long as they meet the requirements. Vice-Chair St. Feliz inquired about a way to have a small business advantage; Assistant Planner remarked it was not allowed. Instead, doing these types of businesses within Town would require funds and a site plan approval. The Vice-Chair also remarked on business support services in Town by identifying and packaging it to draw Infinity and other business. Consultant Santy remarked that Gorman & York, property advisors, are experts in this field and it is a matter of familiarizing oneself with available properties. Advanced CT has a list on its database of all available municipal properties. It is therefore a matter of performing research in addition to marketing to match properties with interested parties. Assistant Planner Badalucca added that no public hearing is required and there are less steps for contractors as it is allowed “as of right” and no specific permit is required in Montville. Vice-Chair St. Feliz remarked on having gone on Sitefinder noting some of the properties on the site are dilapidated; Consultant Santy noted familiarization with zoning is key. The Assistant Planner also reported Mayor Bunnell will be putting out an RFP for a consultant thus the potential for a dedicated person in for the EDC noted Consultant Santy. It is not known whether the new planning director has an economic development background. The Consultant added that since it is budget time consideration should be given to the kind of budget and momentum for the same.

9) Report from Town Council Liaison -- *None*

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*

12) Adjournment

**The meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.**