

TOWN OF MONTVILLE -- PUBLIC SAFETY COMISSION
Regular Meeting – February 26, 2024 -- 6:00 PM
Town Council Chambers – Town Hall

MEETING MINUTES

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 Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. Roll Call.

Present were Chairperson Gary Murphy; Vice-Chair Stephen Stewart, and Commissioners Karen Perkins and Brian Baker. Commissioners William Bauer, Traci Callaghan and Mickey Gillette were absent. A quorum was present.

4. Amendments to the Agenda – *None*

5. Special Recognitions and Presentations.-- *None*

Motion by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Commissioner Perkins to move up Agenda 13.a to accommodate the fire officials who need to leave early from the meeting. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 4-0-0. **Motion carried.**

13a. New Business.

- a.** To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve the FY 2024-2025 Public Safety Budgets.

Commissioner Perkins noted for the record that she submits the reports to the Commission as received. Vice-Chair Stewart questioned whether the budget received was the total budget to run emergency operations and if not if it would be prudent in the future to present the true budget. Fire Chief Messer remarked on the funds from ambulance insurance claims, 3-percent, that assists with the budget. Further, he remarked the current cost for a new ambulance is \$500,000 having doubled in price over the past two (2) years. In response to Vice-Chair Stewart, he confirmed he does go to Public Works to obtain fuel. Commissioner Baker noted the varying costs for fuel for the fire companies as it appears its more cost effective to obtain Town fuel rather than travel. He also inquired about items related to new equipment (\$1,500) and the budget for the, which the Chief identified as hand tools, adapters, etc. Chief Messer reported the cost to run his department last year was \$318,000 as requested by Chairman Murphy. Fire Chief Turner reported his department costs last year were \$430,000 but generally

averages at \$350,000. Last year's costs included repair of the parking lot (\$80,000) and a stair chair (\$16,000). An order was placed for a new ambulance at \$381,000; with the special equipment needed for it the cost is \$425,000 with a 2 ½ year delivery date. Chief Turner explained the details of the CIP fire apparatus item, \$25,000 - \$26,000 for 2025-2026 and thereafter at a cost of \$400. The line item includes SCBAs, spare bottles, regular bottles, and face pieces. The Chief explained since retrofits are not available it was cheaper to get the whole kit. He added a conversation needs to be had about costs for the future—what the Town pays, including bonds and leases. Chief Turner also referenced the new NFDA standard that came out in January that he is still reviewing. Chairperson Murphy asked that the standard be sent to him and he would forward it on to the Commission. The Chairperson also referred to the cost of \$625,000 for a replacement ladder truck. He remarked that Fire Chief Truex was not present to discuss the condition of the current truck but said he wants feedback from the Chief since he submitted the CIP. Chief Turner also explained that funds for SCDA items is a continuing purchase. Chairperson Murphy reported that he spoke with Mohegan Fire Chief Gaetano who stated his actual costs for this year is \$450,000 -- \$500,000. **Motion** by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Baker to approve the 2024-2025 Fire Company Budgets and CIPs, as submitted. Discussion: none. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy, and Baker. *Opposed:* None. **5-0-1. Motion approved.**

6. Communications:

- Copies of monthly statistics reports from Fire Departments, Fire Marshal, Police, Animal Control and Building Official.

Chairperson Murphy confirmed the receipt by the Commission of statistical reports from the Public Safety departments for the month ending January 2024. Vice-Chair Stewart remarked that there was not a Building Department report nor reports for Chesterfield and Mohegan Fire companies. Commissioner Perkins reported that she emails the fire company reports on to the Commission when she gets them.

7. To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve minutes:

- a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2024.

Motion by Vice-Chair Stewart; seconded by Commissioner Perkins to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2024. Discussion: none. **Voice vote: 3-0-1**, Commissioner Baker abstained. **Motion carried.**

8. Remarks from the Public. (Agenda items only—three-minute limit.)

Chairperson Murphy asked three (3) times for remarks. Firefighter Union President Tim Condon remarked on the budgets for fire protection indicating firefighter salaries in the amount as \$176,000 per firefighter. Instead, that figure should be \$113,000 per firefighter per arbitration. A firefighter salary of \$58,737, fringe benefits of \$41,972, and gear of \$9,960 for the cost of one employee is \$110,669. Due to required 24/7 coverage, anytime a firefighter takes sick or vacation leave the shift must be covered thus automatically creating overtime. For a new hire, the cost would equate to \$2,300 (an average of \$26.83/hour) in addition to \$176 for payroll taxes and \$527 for pension totaling \$3,003. A handout was provided to the Commission about these calculations. If the Commission chooses not to endorse 16 firefighters, the estimated cost would be \$113,000 per shift and \$342,00 with overtime and no

new hires. Fire Chief Turner remarked to quell the rumor and confirm that the Montville Fire Company is open although the radon is double the State's air quality level. Mystic Air Quality has been hired to perform tests on Thursday with results expected back next week. Due to the air quality, career staff have been relocated until remediation is complete in the basement which is where Mystic Air Quality said the radon concentration would be found and the only area that will be tested. Costs are not known at this time. Mayor Bunnell moved the firefighters to the Mohegan Fire Station as a health risk precaution. Commissioner Baker remarked that if the first floor at the Montville Fire Station is fine the firefighters could be moved back if the 1st floor is tested and deemed it can be occupied.

9. Remarks from Department Heads.

Police Department Report

Lt. Radford reported on Police Department statistics for the month ending January 31, 2024, as follows: There were 1193 Calls for Service and a total of 261 Citations were issued that included 41 Infractions, 0 Juvenile Summons, 12 Misdemeanors, and 208 Written Warnings. The Lieutenant also reported that Running 4 Heroes came to the Town of Montville on February 16, 2024 to celebrate the life and legacy of Montville Police K-9 Barrett and Connecticut State Police K-9 Brock, both of whom were killed in the line of duty. Chief Blanchette sent letters of appreciation for the event to Fire Chiefs Turner, Messer, and Gaetano whose fire companies assisted at the event and to Chairman Murphy who directed the Canteen in providing officers, firefighters, and special guests with hot food and drinks. A memorial run was done by a 13-year old youth runner from New Jersey. The Lieutenant read the letter into the record as well as the ACO statistics as found under Item 10 b. Lt. Radford also reported he was able to successfully apply for and receive a High Risk Rural Roads Radar Speed Enforcement Grant. The grant affords the Town of Montville \$56,206.87 toward speed enforcement on Town roads. Four (4) new radars in the amount of \$13,400 will be purchased to assist with this enforcement.

Fire Marshal Report

Fire Marshal Barnes reported Fire Marshal Statistics for the month ending January 31, 2024, as follows: Inspections of businesses and apartments (39), New Business Inspection (1), Fire investigations (2), Incident responses/requested to the scene (33), Burn permits issued (3), Construction Project Inspection (3), Sprinkler Inspection (1) and Complaints (1). During the month of January, a total of eight (8) hours were spent on Emergency Management obligations. The Fire Marshal also reported that last Monday the newest of two (2) firefighters hired, Noah Dembrowski started his assignment on the west side of Town. He has been working one week as of today riding third with one of the duty crews, Monday thru Thursday from 7:00 a.m. – 3:24 p.m. at Chesterfield and Oakdale Fire Companies. On March 18, the other hire, Josh Brogaw, will begin work on the west side of Town for four (4) weeks; N. Dembrowski will move to the east side of Town for the same period of time. Upon completion of the four (4) weeks, career staff will be back to train the hires in individual fire stations.

10. Committee and Liaison Reports:

a. Report from Fire Department Liaison. (Perkins)

Commissioner Perkins reported she has yet to receive the monthly statistical reports from the Chesterfield and Mohegan Fire stations but will send them to the Commission once received. Copies of all of the reports will be sent to Town Councilor Sabilia. She also reported that the Montville station is not closed and has 24-hour coverage. Commissioner Perkins is also working community booklet she proposed a few months ago that will include pictures of firefighters and police officers. The Farmers Market First Responder Night will be held on June 25 and include the Touch-a-Truck event. The Police Department and Fire Stations were asked to notify the Farmers Market of their availability. She also encouraged the fire chiefs to petition Finance Department for more funds.

Montville Fire Company (January 2024)

Incidents:	Total
Cancelled Calls	10
EMS Calls	68
Fire Calls	2
Motor Vehicles Accident Calls	6
Other Calls	20
Total Calls:	106

Mohegan Fire Company (January 2024) – No Report

Incidents:	Total
Cancelled Calls	
EMS Calls	
Fire Calls	
Motor Vehicles Accident Calls	
Other Calls	
Total Calls:	

Oakdale Fire Company (January 2024)

Incidents:	Total
Cancelled Calls	14
EMS Calls	50
Fire Calls	2
Motor Vehicles Accident Calls	2
Other Calls	14
Total Calls:	82

Chesterfield Fire Company (December 2023) – No Report

Incidents:	Total
Cancelled Calls	
EMS Calls	

Fire Calls	
Motor Vehicle	
Other Calls	
Total Calls:	

b. Report from Animal Control. (Callaghan)

The January 2024 Activity Reports for the Towns of Montville and Salem were reported by ACO Bruce Rebelo as follows:

Town of Montville Animal Control Report (January 2024)

Activity	Month	YTD FY
# of Animals Impounded:	6	6
# of Animals Sold as Pets:	2	2
# of Animals D.O.A.:	0	0
# of Animals Euthanized:	0	0
Total Complaints Investigated:	42	42
Total Animal Bites Investigated:	1	1
Total Enforcement Action:	2	2
Total Other Calls for Service:	63	63

Town of Salem Animal Control Report (January 2024)

Activity	Month	YTD FY
# of Animals Impounded:	1	1
# of Animals Sold as Pets:	0	0
# of Animals D.O.A.:	0	0
# of Animals Euthanized:	0	0
Total Complaints Investigated:	9	9
Total Animal Bites Investigated:	1	1
Total Enforcement Action:	0	0
Total Other Calls for Service	0	0

c. Report from Police Department Liaison. (Gillette) – No report

Lt. Radford provided Chairperson Murphy on the status of Commissioner Gillette.

d. Report from Building Department Liaison. (Stewart) – No Report

2023-2024 Building Department Report												
	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Permits Issued												
Pending Permits												
Inspections												

Plan Reviews CO's													
Violation Notices													
Unsafe Notices													
Blight Identified													
Blight Abated To Date													

11. Remarks from Fire Chiefs. -- *None*

12. Unfinished Business.

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve a Policy to systemize and retain firefighter data to observe trends and effectiveness. – ***No Action***

13. New Business.

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve the FY 2024-2025 Public Safety Budgets.

Lt. Radford read a letter into the record directed to the Finance Director to explain the requested increases in its 2023-2024 budget line items. Police Services has five (5) as follows:

1. An increase in “Police Salaries” and the addition of two (2) new police officers—the cost to be determined by Finance. The demands of the Police Accountability Act and minimum coverage per the agreement between the Union and the Town, additional manpower would help alleviate overtime expenses. Calls for services requires the need for additional manpower given the agreement between the Town and Board of Education that has taken three (3) police officers off the road.
2. An increase to the “Overtime” line item is dictated by increased demands of the Police Accountability Act and unfunded mandates from it that increase overtime. Also effected are minimum patrol numbers per the Union and Town agreement alleviating Officer safety issues. Increased responsibilities of the Police Department due to investigations and administrative duties will exceed the budget because of these factors. An increase of the “Overtime” line item from \$350,000 to \$450,000 would help toward minimizing any unnecessary overtime.
3. An increase in the “K-9 Expense” line item involves removing the “Safety Equipment” line item and combining it with the K-9 line item. Each has \$500 thus combining the Safety Equipment into “K-9 Expense” for a total of \$1,000.
4. An increase in the “Law Enforcement Programs” line item from \$1,300 to \$13,000 is mainly for the annual Department Assessment for the Law Enforcement Council. The fee was typically taken from the “Training” line item which hinders training abilities and our newly gained responsibilities would incur a larger scale of mandated training and increased unfunded mandates. The assessment fee for this year is \$11,500; the remainder of the LE Program money is for programs needed to join for the positions held.

5. This request refers to retitling the “Equipment Grant Fund” line item to “Prisoner Meals.”
6. The budget for the “Overtime Grants” should be adjusted to give a better idea of grant funding received, although an exact number is an unknown. Currently listed is \$50,000 and approximately \$62,000 received from a DUI Grant and an approximation of \$50,000 from a DRE Grant annually, in addition to options for smaller grants. Thus, the \$112,000 figure is closer to what is granted and reflects the anticipated award for “Grant Overtime” as stated in the Budget Rational page.
 - The only increase for the “Public Safety Building” line item is based upon last year’s cost for Water & Sewer Charges, for a budget increase of \$500.
 - There are two (2) increases proposed for “Dispatch” as follows:
 1. An increase to the “Training & Conference” line item currently at \$800 for four (4) full time Dispatchers to accommodate the eight (8) full time Dispatchers we now have and who are trained for police dispatching. These Dispatchers are required to recertify annually on everything thus driving up the cost of training.
 2. An increase to the “Uniforms” line item that was budgeted for four (4) full time Dispatchers to accommodate and outfit the eight (8) current full time Dispatchers with new appropriate uniforms.
 - A second Administrative Assistant was added to the Police Department to Support the Records Department.

Chief Blanchette responded to a Commission question regarding some of the unfunded needs of the force with accreditation being the biggest mandate. It requires pulling officers off the roads and back on them. He commented on information received weekly from the CT General Assembly that is forwarded to the Mayor for review that references lawmakers passing more costs on to the municipalities. Currently, male prisoners who do not need accommodations are housed at the prison per a meeting with the warden. Female prisoners are kept at the PSB and provided with meals. Prices have been negotiated with McDonalds for \$15 - \$20 and over the past two (2) weeks a lot of prisoner meals have been obtained with the hope it will be adequate. Per a question by Vice-Chair Stewart, it was noted that some dispatch costs are covered but some are covered by the Department. The costs are being discerned since the Department did not have oversight of it in the past. Chief Blanchette responded about the need for part time dispatchers when there are currently eight (8) full time dispatchers. He explained that the part time dispatchers are used to cover rotations. He also responded to Commissioner Baker concerning not having a vehicle replacement line item on the Department CIP. That cost is allocated to the CIP for Public Works. **Motion** by Commissioner Perkins; seconded by Vice-Chair Stewart to approve the 2024-025 Police Department Budget and CIP, as submitted. Discussion: None. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy and Baker. *Opposed:* None. **Vote: 4-0-0. Motion approved.**

Fire Marshal Barnes remarked that increases in the 2024-2025 Fire Department and Emergency Management budgets are economically related to increasing prices. He noted the increases for Equipment Maintenance & Repair from \$50,000 to \$80,000 and Equipment renamed to Equipment Gear at \$40,000. Training & Conferences was increased to \$5,000 at a cost of \$400 for an EMT Refresher. Three (3) additional full time firefighters is amended to

\$113,669 or \$114,000 per firefighter instead of \$176,000 as it is a question as to where Finance obtained that figure. The CIP was submitted to Finance of \$30,000 to replace all ADEs in Town buildings to current standards and an increase to \$21,400 for radios. The Fire Department has two (2) radio systems currently and Dispatch will simulcast over the existing system per a question by Commissioner Baker. As to grants, Mayor Bunnell remarked on a LoSIP request for the same. Regarding accountability at a house fire or with an ambulance call, the Fire Marshal maintains them. The Commission discussed the request for three (3) additional firefighters noting there was not a recommendation from the Mayor or the Town Council. Fire Marshal Barnes remarked he was told last year and by the former Mayor to put in a request for three (3) new firefighters, from 16 to 19. Commissioner Baker questioned how the staffing would work given two (2) career staff must be together. The fire companies have two (2) firefighters each on four (4) shifts and the additional person would be utilized to fill in the holes according to Vice-Chair Stewart with associated benefits per Commissioner Baker. Fire Marshal Barnes reported the annual salary for a firefighter Grade D status is \$50,000 versus a Grade A of \$60,000 to \$80,000. Commissioner Baker noted that the overtime budget of \$160,000 should be \$342,000, but \$535,000 per the Finance Director. The budget paperwork was given to the Commission by the Finance Director. The Commission discussed delaying the vote until next month to obtain clarity from the Finance Director although it was noted that the role of the Commission was to make recommendations and the basis for approving three (3) more firefighters. Chairperson Murphy proposed approval of the EMS and Fire Marshal budgets and forward them to the Town Council with a note regarding the discrepancy with the Finance Director's figures versus that of the Fire Marshal's figures.

Motion by Commissioner Perkins; seconded by Commissioner Stewart to approve the 2024-2025 EMS and Fire Marshal budgets, line items 10810 for \$136,687 and 10830 for \$114,739, respectively to the Town Council. Discussion: None. **Roll Call vote:** *In favor:* Commissioners Perkins, Stewart, Murphy and Baker. *Opposed:* None. **Vote: 4-0-0. Motion approved.**

Motion by Chairperson Murphy; seconded by Commissioner Perkins to increase the 2024-2025 Fire Marshal budget for line item 10880-53021 Equipment Maintenance & Repair to approve and have it remain at \$50,000. Discussion: Chairperson Murphy questioned Fire Marshal Barnes as to whether the current funds in the line item was sufficient. It is not as a Mohegan the 2008 reserve truck needs a new generator that imploded per a question by Commissioner Baker. It was asked if the generator should be in a special line that is typically used for oil changes, tires, pump test etc. The Fire Marshal explained that \$85,000 was expended from the line item in 2023 but was cut by Finance; last year \$85,567 was spent and the line item was again cut by Finance to \$50,000. For the past two years, \$80,00 was requested for the line item but was eventually cut to \$50,000 per Chairperson Murphy. Further, the Chairman noted equipment maintenance has always been done but remarked the purchase of a new generator is not what this line item should be used for. Commissioner Baker inquired how it was determined that the Fire Department would pay these expenses; the directive came from the former Mayor reported Fire Marshal Barnes. Commissioner Baker remarked the cost should not come from the Fire Marshal budget; Chairperson Murphy remarked that the Mayor could request that it be paid. Any expense over \$500 the Town pays; below that amount the

Fire Marshal pays. Looking for funds instead of blowing his budget was proposed by Commissioner Baker; Chairperson Murphy remarked he did the same for many years but indicated that Finance could determine the source of the funds. Commissioner Baker remarked there should be a distinction between a repair versus catastrophic.

14. Remarks from the Public. (Non-agenda items only—three-minute limit)

Chairperson Murphy asked three (3) times for remarks. Matthew Suarez of 18 Cranberry Drive, Uncasville remarked about the accountability at fire incidents and the struggles associated with the calls. He noted that radios are not the issue and asked what difference would it be if someone has their own radio. M. Suarez also remarked on the shoveling of sidewalks in Town and commented on the area of his home and having a teen daughter who walks to school. He noted the vast majority of the Town does not have sidewalks and asked for a statute update citing it as a particular issue at Oakdale Heights.

15. Remarks from the Mayor.

Mayor Bunnell welcomed Commissioner Baker to the Commission who he remarked has shown his commitment this evening. He praised Chief Turner for acting quickly regarding the air quality concern reported this evening. The Mayor also reported that the Police Department Log is now on the Town website that furthers accountability and shows the public how busy is the Department. The Animal Control facility and the cost to get it off the naughty list with the State was mentioned in addition to the lack of information for sharing of services at New London. Mayor Bunnell has sought feedback from State Senators Murphy and Blumenthal for emergency funding for the new Animal Control facility. Additionally, talks with Bozrah to obtain a community investment fund has rendered no movement on the grant per CT State Representative Ryan. As to the comment this evening regarding shoveled sidewalks in Town, the Mayor reported the ordinance applies solely to commercial establishments only to be completed within a 24-hour period. Residential shoveling was dropped and strongly opposed but Mayor Bunnell remarked that he would support it.

16. Remarks from Town Council Liaison.

Town Councilor Sabilia thanked everyone for the information supplied this evening and remarked that recommendations made this evening would be taken under consideration.

17. Remarks from Commissioners.

Commissioner Baker thanked the Public Safety team that he is now a part of. Vice-Chair Stewart remarked that a fairly good job was done with the budgets with a lot of review and learning. He asked all to be safe. Chairperson Murphy remarked that budgets are not easy with the police department being a big Town expense that will not make some happy. He referenced the question this evening regarding the pay for paid firefighters that needs to be addressed with the Town Finance Department. The Chairperson also raised a question concerning liability if a paid firefighter working within Town and goes to another Town thereafter to work and has a heart attack. He remarked that a ruling must be obtained from the Town Attorney on the same and stated there was some case law on the matter.

18. Adjournment.

Motion by Commissioner Perkins; seconded by Vice-Chair Stewart to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 4-0-0, 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.**