

**Town of Montville**  
**Town Council**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**May 13, 2024, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Montville Town Hall – Town Council Chambers**

1. Call to Order  
Chairman May called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in honor of our military.
3. Roll Call  
Present were Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, May, Sabilia, Southard, and Yuchniuk. Also present was Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr.
4. Special Recognitions/Presentations – *none*
5. Alterations to the Agenda – *none*
6. To Consider and Act on a Motion to Approve:
  - a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of April 8, 2024
  - b. The Special Meeting Minutes of April 24, 2024
  - c. The General Government Budget Public Hearing Minutes of April 24, 2024
  - d. The Board of Education Budget Public Hearing Meeting Minutes of April 25, 2024Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Sabilia, to approve the April 8, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes; April 24, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes; April 24, 2024 General Government Budget Public Hearing Meeting Minutes, and; April 25 Board of Education Public Hearing Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor.
7. Executive Session
  - a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the Gardner Lake Authority and Youth Advisory Board. Discussions to include members of the Town Council and Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr. Motion made by Councilor Sabilia, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion: Interviewed were Candidates Scott Soderberg, Gardner Lake Authority, and Vouise M. Fonville, Sr., Youth Advisory Board. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Invited parties exited Town Council Chambers for Executive Session at 7:03 p.m. Chairman May resumed the meeting at 7:21 p.m. No votes were taken during Executive Session.
8. Remarks from the public relating to matters on the agenda with a three-minute limit  
Rebecca Maurice, 1567 Route 85, Oakdale, Owner, All-Bright Canines, voiced her continuing concerns with the issues related to the Animal Control Facility, including the inactions and consistently failed inspections. She welcomed the improvements, provided they were not mere band-aids or token gestures to mask their inaction for a new Facility. She expressed her concerns with the continued failed inspections, especially the violation of potable water. After inspecting the matter, her team discovered that the Facility has failed the Department of Agriculture inspections for over five (5) years. They have visited several departments, made numerous telephone calls, and submitted a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request for the water test, to little or no avail. Through their investigations, they discovered that the well that provided water to the Public Works building and Animal Control Facility was contaminated 23 years ago. While precautions were taken for the Public Works employees, none were taken for the animals in the Facility. After submitting the test results to an environmental specialist, she found that exposure to the water, which contained dangerous levels of hydrocarbons, acetone, and other petroleum-based products, can cause serious health issues, including coma and death.

She provided an example of Amelia, a puppy who was raised in the Shelter and experienced seizures and liver damage, indicating a possible prolonged exposure to a toxin. According to Title 22 of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture Regulation, which states that dogs and cats should have unimpeded access to nutritious food and clean water, the Town of Montville has been abusing animals for the past 23 years. She stated the community's lack of trust in the leadership of the town, which consistently ignored the violation(s) and their animals, who deserve more than band-aid solutions, inaction, and a crippled shelter with a poisoned well..

Adam Elkins, 31 Bridge Street, Montville, spoke in support of the Build the Shelter team, who are doing excellent work and improving the lives of many animals and commented on the Town's lack of action.

Ann Gaulin, 64 Damato Drive, Oakdale, stated that their delay tactics have been continuing since 1965 and felt that the Town Council could take action this evening by scheduling a Town Meeting to vote on the allocation of the Town's surplus funds for the Animal Shelter.

Sara Manwaring, Quaker Hill/Montville border, stated that, while Ms. Maurice has offered her services, free of charge, to the Town, no one has reached out to her to discuss what would be best for the animals. She stated that the new, unvented tarp that was recently placed on the Animal Shelter has created a greenhouse effect that would overheat the animals housed in the Facility. She felt that the Town had the funds for a new Facility and has, rather, chosen to poison and ignore the situation, the animals, the violations, and the people. She questioned how the Town could welcome families and businesses when their animals are not kept safe and are disgracefully treated. She felt that it was time for them to do what was right and best for the animals.

Susan Warzecha, 339 Oxoboxo Dam Road, Oakdale, showed the Town Councilors her dogs and requested that should they ever become lost and reside in the Animal Shelter, they not be provided with or have any contact with the water.

David Turner, 68 Ridge Hill Road, Oakdale, a long-time resident and 10-year member of the Niantic Watershed Committee, spoke in support of a new Animal Shelter. Based on the comments regarding its condition, it is clear that the maintenance of the building has been deferred for many years. He urged the Town Council to take action and be part of the solution, rather than the problem.

Susan Waters, 1368 Old Colchester Road, Oakdale, spoke in support of the Animal Control Facility, stated her pride in the Town, respect for the Mayor and its leadership, and the Town's continuous support for its families, adding that their pets, too, are part of their families. She was perplexed with the Town's purchase of conservatory property to protect the land and its habitat and its lack of respect and support for a decent Shelter. She stated that the Town has always done the right thing and questioned why they are not doing so now.

9. Communications

- a. Copy of the April 2024 Financial Reports from Finance Director Barbara Griffin
- b. Copy of the legal bills from Suisman-Shapiro for the month of March 2024
- c. Copy of the legal bills from Halloran & Sage for the month of March 2024

10. Report from the Town Attorney on Matters Referred – *none*

11. Remarks from the Mayor and/or Administrative Department Heads to include Matters Referred

Finance Director Barbara Griffin provided the Councilors with a copy of the Financial Audit, stating that the Auditors are scheduled to provide a presentation to the Town

Council during their June Regular Meeting. She reminded the Councilors of her request to extend the Auditors' contract for an additional year due to the recent turnover in the office. She noted that the Financial Highlights on page 5 of the Report indicate that the Town's Unassigned Fund Balance for FY2022/23 was \$12,390,312.00 or approximately 17% of the Town's General Fund expenditures. She recommended that an additional line item be added to the Nips Fund Account for equipment related to the cleaning of the roads, citing the Public Works Director's request to utilize some of the funds for the equipment.

Montville Police Chief Willard Blanchette, III, confirmed that they are continuing to "band-aid" the current facility and provide a safe home for the animals. He provided a brief history and update on the current Animal Facility since the establishment of the Independent Police Department. Former Animal Control Officer (ACO) Christian Swanson informed him of the failed state inspection and the deficiencies, including the temperature control and less-than-sanitary conditions in July 2023. ACO Swanson resigned from her position for other employment and Montville Police Officer Bruce Rebelo assumed the position in January 2024. He, along with Assistant ACO (AACO) Tina Brown have been working diligently to improve the conditions of the Facility and have drafted policies and procedures to professionalize their services. These improvements include:

- 1) new forms to track their daily activities;
- 2) training and certification records for the ACO and AACO;
- 3) policies and procedures that include State mandates and Best Practice guidelines;
- 4) cleaning the facility by eliminating old and unused items;
- 5) repairing a window, reducing the number of birds entering the facility and their excrement, and improving the Facility's climate;
- 6) replacement of the old, tattered tarps with clear tarps;
- 7) weekly deep cleaning of the Facility, eliminating much of the odor;
- 8) additional storage space (provided by Public Works) for lesser-used items;
- 9) replacement of dog flaps, aiding in controlling the temperature of the Facility;
- 10) cleaning of pipes, eliminating water back-ups and the smell of moldy water;
- 11) water testing – the water was found to have a higher-than-average sodium level, but be within the acceptable guidelines. Nevertheless, *potable water continues to be brought in for the animals*;
- 12) AACO Brown's continuing efforts to find good homes for adoptable animals;
- 13) requested price estimates for the repair of the concrete floors; arrangements have been made with New London to house the animals in their Facility while the repairs are being conducted;
- 14) numerous visits to the Facility by the Legislators, including the Lieutenant Governor and State Senators and Representatives – all of whom have pledged their support for funding;
- 15) continuous search for fiscally-responsible solutions;
- 16) the creation of two Amazon accounts with a wish list for needed supplies for the Animal Care and Maintenance (Fund 17) and Animal Control Facility (Fund 82)

He expressed their appreciation for the citizens' ongoing support, from their attendance at meetings to the raising of funds. He stated the Police Department's ongoing commitment to provide professional police service and compassionately care for their animals.

OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) Inspection (Mayor Bunnell) – \$15,000.00 in fines were levied against the Town by OSHA, including SDS (Safety Data Sheets) due to donations of cleaning supplies that were not included on the Sheets, an electrical issue that has since been rectified, and tripping hazards. The Mayor is in the process of negotiating with the State regarding the fines.

Land Use and Development Director Matt Davis provided an update on the Mohegan Dam, stating that the Tribe has submitted an application to the CT DEEP (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) for the removal of the Dam. Upon review, the Town Engineer expressed concerns regarding the downstream culverts and the two (2) closest culverts will be analyzed. He expressed his appreciation to the Economic Development Commission for their support of the recently adopted Cannabis Regulations. One inquiry has since been received for the establishment of a growing facility. The design drawings for the Pier have been reviewed and approved by the property owners and the project is moving forward. The Office is working on a \$250,000.00 CIF (Community Investment Fund) Planning Grant submission to create a collaborative effort between the Planning & Zoning and Economic Development Commissions to accomplish some of the recommendations included in the 2022 POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development), including targeting investment areas for various housing developments. A Pre-Application Review Team will be formed to aid applicants in the application process. The Office will also be meeting with the IT Department to discuss the details related to the GIS (Geographic Information System). He is in the process of reviewing the updates to the State's Conservation & Development Plan, which is utilized for the evaluation of grant applications and may include significant changes affecting the Town. The Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) has issued a draft of the updated Regional Open Space Plan which will be forwarded to the Conservation Commission for input. The first invoice for the 72 Affordable Housing Unit Project at Oxoboxo Lofts (Faria) Brownfield Grant was received and the Lofts will be featured as part of SCCOG's Affordable Housing Projects bus tour. A request will be submitted to CT DOT (Connecticut Department of Transportation) to extend the Community Connectivity Grant for the Route 32 sidewalks.

Mayor Bunnell reported that he continues to attend the Town's board and commission meetings and engage in the staff meetings as well as the ongoing Union contract negotiations. Cindy Breton has begun working in the Mayor's office following Connie Malchiodi's retirement after 13 years of service to the Town. The new owner of the Town's old Drive-In Theatre has offered the Town to muster at the Drive-In Theatre (1080 Route 32). The Owner, who is unsure of his plans for the location, looks forward to and has expressed his willingness to work with the Town to develop the location in a manner that is beneficial to all. An Organizational Meeting regarding the refurbishment of the old Route 163/Maple Avenue Water Tank was held. The volunteer group is seeking suggestions and ideas from the public for its refurbishment in a manner that reflects the history and future of the Town. Connecticut Scrap, which owns the tank, has pledged its support, sending out the paint chips to be analyzed and arranging the structural study. He also attended a meeting with the commercial development company regarding the leasing of the Dock Road property as it applies to the fishing pier and boat launch. Closing meetings were held with CT OSHA, as reported by Montville Police Chief Blanchette, who inspected the WPCA (Water Pollution Control Authority) Treatment Plant, a Pump Station, Public Works, a Police Station, a Transfer Station, and the Kennel. He also attended the Gardner Lake Authority Meeting and met with the First Selectmen of Bozrah and Salem regarding their plans at the Lake for the upcoming summer season, including the hiring of the Police Boat to patrol and provide visibility on the Lake. He attended the Niantic Bay Quilters' Quilts of Valor Ceremony at Breakfast at Diana's, honoring and presenting six (6) veterans with a personalized quilt. He also attended the CT Mirror/Mohegan Sun Conversation with the Governor, where he requested the Governor's support for the new Animal Control Facility. He provided a tour of the Animal Control Facility to Representative Holly Cheeseman, who is working hard to support the Town for the Bond. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Locals 818 and 2504 to transfer the responsibilities of the Animal Control Officer

to the Police Department. He stated his lack of awareness regarding the FOIA requests and confirmed with the Public Works Director that an individual stopped by the Department seeking the water test results, which were provided earlier. He stated that the Town is making efforts to improve the current Facility until a new Facility is constructed.

12. Reports from Standing Committees

a. Town Administration/Rules of Procedure – *no meeting; no report*

b. Finance

Chairman May reported that the Committee is continuing their review of the budget.

c. Public Works/Solid Waste Disposal

Councilor Caron reported that the Committee discussed the trash alongside the roads. Arrangements are being made for the inmates to assist the employees in picking up the trash. The cutting of the brush along the side of the roads and Pavilion repairs will begin this week, weather permitting. The Department continues to cut trees. The Nip Program for Non-Profit Organizations continues to work well.

13. Reports from Special Committees and Liaison Councilors

a. Councilor Caron: Commission on Aging, Non-Profit Organizations, Social Services, Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Fund

Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Fund – The quarterly stipends for the Fire Companies were approved during the April Regular Meeting.

Social Services – The Grand Opening for the Social Services Building/Food Bank is being planned. Nearly 4,000 meals have been distributed to date. The new walk-in freezer/refrigerator has arrived and alarms were installed.

Commission on Aging – A very successful Seniors' Art Show was held and the Newport bus trip is full; he is in the process of seeking funding to support an additional bus trip for the seniors. The Commission discussed the need for more elderly housing and additional program offerings. The new computers have been set up and they are in search of an instructor to teach computer courses to the seniors.

b. Councilor Jaskiewicz: Board of Education (BOE), Planning & Zoning Commission

Due to illness, Councilor Southard attended the recent BOE Meeting in lieu of Councilor Jaskiewicz. The BOE recognized Montville Marvels Alexa Beams, Jacob Russell, Matthew Chen, and Abigail Daniewicz for their “remarkable resilience and steadfast dedication to academic excellence” and Tyl Middle School Student Jayce Adams and Student Resource Officer (SRO) Kirsten Todd for providing emergency aid to a student. Several policies were adopted, including allowing the Superintendent to apply for grants without the Board's approval, adopting exit surveys for resigning staff members, a requirement for withdrawing 17-year-olds to enroll in adult education, a requirement that children must be 5 years of age before September 1 to enroll in Kindergarten. The BOE also discussed the proposed FY2024/25 Budget and the Mayor's 2.5% increase which, due to unfunded state mandates, existing contracts, and increasing special education costs, would be detrimental and result in staff cuts.

c. Councilor Lathrop: Economic Development Commission, Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA)

The Economic Development Commission is working closely with the Planning and Zoning Commission to develop an action plan.

WPCA – The Cook Drive Water Tower project is progressing. The public was informed of future construction delays on Maple Avenue during the installation of the water line feeding into the Rand-Whitney Containerboard. The road will be repaved after the earth has settled.

- d. Councilor Sabilia: Conservation Commission, Public Safety Commission, Youth Services Bureau and Advisory Board

The Conservation Commission's Garden Club is meeting weekly at the Conservation Center (Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m.), Senior Center (Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m.), and Town Hall (Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.). The Avalonia Land Conservancy is opening a walking trail in Montville/Bozrah on South Road. The Commission is in the process of compiling the Town's trails for easy access.

The Youth Services Bureau is hosting a Mental Health Monday event at Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream on Monday, May 27, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.; 10% of the sales will be donated to the Bureau. They will also be hosting a table, providing giveaways and information, for Mental Health Fridays at Montville High School. The Bureau wished to extend its appreciation to GHP, LLC, and Dave Waddington for providing funding for the Cook Tower Restoration Project. Six (6) Montville students attended the state's recent Youth Services Bureau Day at the State Capitol. Discussions included youth empowerment and connectivity. Suicide Prevention 9-8-8 signage is being posted throughout the Town. The Bureau partnered with the Police Department and collected 117.5 lbs. of prescription drugs; prescription lock boxes, information, and pouches were also distributed.

Public Safety Commission – The Montville Police Department was awarded Gardner Lake Authority's Patrol Boat Contract. Montville Police Lt. David Radford recognized Officer Dan Witts and K-9 Officer Sig for assisting the East Lyme Police Department with the apprehension of a fleeing suspect and Officer Brian Kelly who assisted a State Trooper on Route 395 who was fighting with a suspect. The Police Department received almost 1,500 Calls for Services and 630 Citations, including 533 written warnings that were issued as a result of the Grants that were received.

- e. Councilor Southard: Farmers Market Committee, Library Committee, Parks & Recreation Commission

Library Committee – *no meeting; no report*

The Farmers Market Committee approved their vendors and secured the music for this year's events. The Committee continues to search for guest vendors. Non-profit organizations are encouraged to contact them via their website ([montvillectfarmersmarket.com](http://montvillectfarmersmarket.com)) to reserve a booth on Community Night on June 25.

Parks and Recreation Commission – Parks and Recreation Commission – The bands for this season's Summer Concert Series have been confirmed and the fireworks contract for the June 15 Carnival was signed. A successful Annual Easter Egg Hunt was held with approximately 200 children participating in the daytime event and 59 children attending the evening event. The Community Center Exploratory Committee is hoping to contract a company to conduct preliminary cost estimates and feasibility options for a new community center. A Job Description Sub-Committee was also formed to review and update the Department's current job descriptions.

#### 14. Appointments and Resignations

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to accept the resignation of William Pieniadz from the Building Code Board of Appeals and Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority, effective immediately.

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: Councilors Jaskiewicz and May expressed their regrets. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Motion carried.

- b. To Consider and Act on a Motion to appoint Micah Messer to the Youth Advisory Board, with a term to expire on May 13, 2026.

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Motion carried.

- c. To Consider and Act on a Motion to appoint Brenda Dean to fill a vacancy on the Farmers Market Committee, with a term to expire on March 26, 2025.

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Motion carried.

- d. To Consider and Act on a Motion to re-appoint Adam Heckle to the Conservation Commission, with a term to expire on June 11, 2026.

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Southard. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Motion carried.

- e. To Consider and Act on a Motion to accept the resignation of Sheelagh Lapinski from the Youth Advisory Board, effective immediately.

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None. Motion carried.

#### 15. Unfinished Business

- a. To Consider and Act on a Motion to discuss the progress of the Animal Control Facility. (Councilor Yuchniuk)

Motion made by Councilor Lathrop, seconded by Councilor Yuchniuk. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor.

Councilor Yuchniuk stated that his request for the inclusion of the following resolutions on this evening's agenda were denied:

THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES to utilize \$2,000,000.00 (two million dollars) from the Town's Reserve Fund Account to fund the construction of a new Animal Control Facility.

As reported by the Finance Director, there is currently \$12.4 million or 16.9% in the Town's Unassigned Fund Balance. The utilization of \$2 million from the account would result in an Unassigned Fund Balance amount of 14%, which is well within the recommended amount of 12% to 16%. Per the Town Charter, the amount would not exceed the required 5% of the current tax levy and, as such, may be decided upon through a Resolution and a Town Meeting and would alleviate the tax burden.

THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES to bond \$2,000,000.00 (two million dollars).

While bonding the project would result in a tax burden on the Town's citizens, the payments would be spread out over a set number of years and the amount would be offset by the previous, expiring bonds. Councilor Yuchniuk expressed his dismay with the removal of the items by the Chair without notice, the lack of response from any of the Councilors regarding his demand that the items be placed on the Agenda, and a subsequent telephone call with the Mayor. While understanding that the Democrats hold the majority vote on the Town Council, he was disturbed by some of the Town Officials' apparent feeling that the Town is no longer a constitution governed by its Town Charter. The residents of the Town have consistently filled the Town Council

Chambers and spoken in support of a new Animal Control Facility. The discussions have been continuing for several years and further delays will result in additional increasing costs to the Town. He has offered several options and received only placating words and empty promises. He felt that the Mayor had no apparent desire to construct a new facility and continued to delay the matter by wasting and allocating the Town's funds to improve the existing Facility, knowing that it is structurally impossible to bring the building up to code, eventually resulting in its closing in 2029. He felt that the Mayor and the Democratic panel had forgotten that they work and serve the Town and its residents. He speaks for the animals who have no voice and implores the public to continue their fight and spread the word.

Chairman May stated that there is a process by which items are placed on the Agenda, including sending the request to add the items to the Agenda to the Chair, sending any resolutions related to the budget to the Finance Committee, and, possibly, sending the item(s) to the Town and Bond Attorneys for the exact wording of the Resolution(s). He recommended that he work with the Finance Director and Town Clerk to avoid placing the Town in a precarious position. He also stated that his request to form a Building Committee to review and discuss the construction of a new Animal Control Facility was denied by the then-Chairman in 2018. He expressed his support for a new Facility and the need to make the current Facility habitable until the issue is resolved and a new Facility is constructed. He added that they are currently in the midst of the budget season and part of the Unassigned Fund Balance may be needed to offset the Town's FY2025/26 Budget. He also expressed his strong opposition to making the issue political.

Councilor Caron concurred, stating that he, too, questioned and learned the importance of following the process to avoid any future issues. He also felt that the issue was not political, adding that the new facility could also have been constructed when the Republicans were in control of the Town Council. He stated his support for a new Facility and reiterated the importance of following the correct process, as outlined. Councilor Jaskiewicz agreed, adding that they should all work together and, while understanding the public's impatience, stated the need to correctly follow the process.

#### 16. New Business

- a. **Resolution #2024-25. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to refund taxes due to overpayments and corrections in the amount of \$4,710.87 (four thousand seven hundred ten dollars and eighty-seven cents) as requested by the Tax Collector. (Councilor May)

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None.

Resolution passed.

- b. **Resolution #2024-26. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to waive all in-kind services and fees for the 2024 Montville Carnival related to Police, Fire, and Public Works in the amount of \$6,390.00 (six thousand three hundred ninety dollars and thirty-four cents). (Councilor Southard)

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None.

Resolution passed.

- c. **Resolution #2024-27. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to authorize Mayor Leonard Bunnell, Sr., to enter into a contract with the Southeastern



Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) for the provision of Building Code Enforcement Trainee Services. (Mayor Bunnell)

Motion made by Councilor Caron, seconded by Councilor Sabilia. Discussion: Mayor Bunnell stated that the contract would help resolve the issues in the Building Department which is currently without a Building Official and Assistant Building Official. Currently, the office is staffed by a Building Official, provided by SCCOG, two (2) days/week, the former Building Official, and a part-time Building Official. The long-term plan for the office is to hire a trainee, through SCCOG, who will eventually be hired as a Building Inspector III (entry-level) following the passing of the exam and work his/her way up. The short-term plan is to negotiate a contract with the Union and improve their offerings in hopes of attracting a qualified individual for the position.

Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None.

Resolution passed.

- d. **Resolution #2024-28. THE TOWN OF MONTVILLE HEREBY RESOLVES** to set the wage scale for Seasonal Help at the Water Pollution Control Authority in the range minimum wage to \$21.00 (twenty-one dollars) per hour until such time as amended.

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Caron. Discussion: None. Roll Call vote, 7-0, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Councilors Caron, Jaskiewicz, Lathrop, Sabilia, Southard, Yuchniuk, and May. Voting in Opposition: None.

Resolution passed.

17. Remarks from the Public with a three-minute limit

Montville Police Department Lt. David Radford announced that Law Enforcement Week was kicked off last Saturday in Washington, D.C., with the National Police Dog Foundation's Ceremony honoring 25 (twenty-five) Fallen K-9s, including K-9 Barrett. In addition, 118 Officers were honored and added to the Wall. As part of the event, Montville Police Officer Lindsey Michaels represented the Police Department in the Unity Tour, a memorial ride for fallen officers, riding her bicycle 300 miles from New Jersey to Washington, D.C., in honor of K-9 Barrett and Officer Joseph Sachatello.

Rebecca Maurice, 1567 Route 85, Oakdale, in response to an earlier question, stated that the FOIA request was submitted on April 26 to [dwdcompliance@ct.gov](mailto:dwdcompliance@ct.gov) by David Turner on behalf of the Build the Shelter team. She questioned whether additional water testing would be conducted, whether it was the first time the water had been tested in 23 years, and the possibility of gaining access to the previous water testing results. She provided a timeline between the years of 2019 and 2023, during which the Mayor and Councilors were presented with the failed inspection reports and, yet, continued not to act on the issue until the residents began investigating the matter. The community calls for the Town to immediately cease & desist from utilizing the contaminated water from the well, adding that the ingestion of high levels of sodium is poisonous and can result in serious health issues. The Town's years of neglect are divided down party lines and these decisions are directly related to the depth of human compassion. The heroes have signed petitions, shared their plight on Facebook and in newspapers, attended meetings, purchased signs and t-shirts, and unified at rallies. They are requesting that the Mayor do his job.

State Senator Cathy Osten spoke with respect to the Animal Control Facility and provided a brief history of her involvement. She explained the Bonding process, which begins with the submission of a Bill in the Legislature, signed by herself and four (4) other Representatives in a bipartisan manner. A letter, which was sent to all of the members of the Bond Committee, including the Treasurer and Comptroller, by the Mayor made a large impact, inciting the members to speak with the Governor and encouraging him to place the item on the Agenda. The Bond Commission may meet as late as June. All five (5)

Representatives have met with the Governor, his staff, Chief of Staff, and others who play an instrumental role. The Town of Montville has been deemed a distressed municipality and it has been proven that the Facility is a need in the community and would be a positive regional asset, once completed. She thanked the Mayor and Town Councilors for their efforts and ensured the public that they were equally committed to the issue, having spoken several times with Mayor Bunnell and Councilors Caron and Southard on the matter. She also extended her appreciation to the community for expressing their ongoing support and consistently reminding them of the issue, making it easier for her to push the issue. She stated her continuing commitment.

Adam Elkins, 31 Bridge Street, Montville, stated that he is a registered Democrat and, yet stands before them this evening in support of Councilor Yuchniuk, a Republican. Actions speak louder than words and he has yet to hear a plan. He requested they build the Shelter.

Anne Roberts Pierson, 4 Anderson Drive, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), thanked the Town Councilors for their hard work. She wished to bring to their attention the proposed application to establish a quarry on part of a historic site related to the War of 1812. She informed them that the original application was withdrawn in early February, revised, and re-submitted in April. Following the resubmission, the Town Planner was “very abruptly and arbitrarily” fired by the Mayor, without reason and, within two business days, a new Town Planner was hired. She submitted Exhibit 25, received on December 14, 2023, from Phillip & Denise LaPierre, Uncasville, stating their health, safety, and noise concerns with the proposed project, for the record. The Public Hearing for the application is scheduled for June 13, 2024. She urged the Councilors to review the application and submit a letter in support or opposition to the application, which will affect their community and the entire Southeastern Connecticut region.

Douglas Schwartz, Groton, concurred with Ms. Pierson, stating that it was imperative that the Town voice their concerns regarding the proposed quarry. He commented on the historical value of the land, the direction of the noise towards the Town, the negative effect on their pets, and the several organizations that have spoken in opposition to the project. He submitted three (3) press articles related to the blasting contractor who will be operating the proposed quarry and its effects on the community.

Carol Howard, 23 Bayberry Lane, requested that action be taken on the new Animal Control Facility, adding that it was not a “sure thing”, as previously stated. She challenged them to return next month with an alternative should the Town not receive the Bond.

18. Remarks from the Councilors and the Mayor

Councilor Yuchniuk, in response to the Chairman’s previous comments, proposed the Chairman, rather than the Clerk, send out the e-mail requesting the proposed items to be included on the monthly Agenda. He also felt that the process involved in constructing the Facility could ensue following the Town Council’s approval to allocate the funds. He thanked the public for taking the time to attend their meetings and for their continuing efforts. Having been an Animal Control Officer for the past 14 (fourteen) years, he is aware of the duties of the position, and its needs, and has experienced sub-par conditions that are not remedied due to an uncaring administration. He urged the residents to continue their fight.

*Chairman May stated that the original architectural drawings were “excessive”, did not take into account the needs of the Town, and reiterated that a Building Committee should have been formed. He stated that he should be cc’d on all requests for additions to the agenda, adding that the Town Attorney and Bond Counsel should be consulted with for resolutions involving the expenditure of Town funds. He stated the importance of*

*following the process to avoid unnecessary delays and reiterated his support for a new Animal Control Facility.*

Councilor Lathrop thanked the public for attending their meeting and commended them on the recent Pup Rally event, showing their passion and support for the project. He stated that, like them, they are also pushing the issue to support a new Facility and are working through the process.

Councilor Sabilia stated that, while they will investigate the issue regarding the potable water, to the best of his knowledge, the Facility was bringing in water from the Public Works Department for the animals. He also did not feel that former ACO Christian Swanson or Assistant ACO Brown would have provided contaminated water to the animals. He thanked everyone for attending and speaking this evening and commended them on the recent Pup Rally event. He encouraged them to continue their support, adding that he understood their frustrations. He reiterated their support and care for the animals.

Councilor May reminded everyone that they voted to table their discussions related to the Facility until the results of the Bond were in and, should they not be approved, would seek funding through a State Bond. He assured the public that they are working towards the same goal and added the importance of reviewing the Town's budget in its entirety and the scarcity of funds due to the previous allocation of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds for recurring costs, the requested BOE budget increase, and the allocation of approximately \$3.5 millions of their Unassigned Fund Balance during the previous year(s). He also felt that the comments related to their inaction and statements related to the existence of a political division on the issue were incorrect.

Councilor Caron thanked everyone for speaking this evening and enlightening him on some of the issues, of which he was unaware. He also expressed his appreciation to Montville Police Chief Blanchette and the Officers for their hard work. He stated the Councilors' support for a new Animal Control Facility and assured the public that they were investigating other options. He also thanked Senator Osten for attending and speaking at their meeting this evening.

Councilor Jaskiewicz also expressed his appreciation to the public for attending this evening's meeting and stated his lack of knowledge regarding the contamination of the water.

Councilor Southard reported that she provided Ms. Maurice with the Bond Commission List and received a phone call from the State Comptroller Sean Scanlon soon after regarding the issue. She has also spoken with the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Senator Osten. She encouraged them to continue their efforts and urged the Legislators to provide for their region, which is often neglected or forgotten. She pledged that she would continue to speak with the Legislators and is hopeful that the item will be included on the Bond Commission's Agenda.

Mayor Bunnell reported that Phoenix Laboratory conducted the water testing on April 30, which revealed that the water, while high in sodium, was potable and not contaminated. The plan to secure funding for the project has been stated several times; otherwise, the issue will be sent to a referendum, hopefully, at the same time as the National Election to ensure that the greatest number of voters will have the opportunity to vote on the matter. In the meantime, he stated that they are continuing their efforts to improve the safety of the current Facility and assured the public that a new Shelter will be constructed. He stated that he was not aware that the proposed quarry project was revived and would be voicing their opposition to the project. He reminded everyone to attend the Town's Annual Memorial Day Parade this Sunday at 1:00 p.m.

## 19. Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Jaskiewicz, seconded by Councilor Southard, to adjourn the meeting at 9:38 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by: Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville

**AN AUDIO RECORD OF THE MEETING CAN BE FOUND ON THE TOWN'S WEBSITE LOCATED UNDER RESOURCES – MEETING RECORDINGS**