

Town of Montville Town Council
Public Hearing Meeting Minutes of Wednesday, April 27, 2011
7:00 p.m. – Town Council Chambers
Town Hall

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Jacobson called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present were Councilors Beetham, Buebendorf, Caron, Hillman, McFee (7:04 p.m.), Murphy and Jacobson. Also present was Mayor Jaskiewicz.

3. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a Moment of Silence in Honor of our Troops.

4. Public Hearing – Board of Education Budget

Chairperson Jacobson stated she would like to open the public hearing with a presentation from the Board of Education Chairman, David Rowley, followed by a presentation from Dr. Pam Aubin, Superintendent of the Montville School District.

Mr. Rowley, Board of Education Chairman introduced Debra Reed-Iler, Carrie Baxter, Steven Loiler, and Todd Pomazon, members of the Board of Education in attendance. He stated crafting a budget in the amount of thirty six million dollars is not an easy task that begins in the fall when the children return to school and continues throughout the year until it gets to the point that the budget is presented to the Town Council for consideration. He encouraged people from the community to take part in the budget process by stating what they feel is important in the school budget and what they feel is not important. There were four forums to date, one at Mohegan School, one at the Montville High School, one at the Murphy School and a budget forum at the Senior Citizen Center. There was a great cross section of staff, community members and parents who gave their input. Pam Aubin, Superintendent of schools and her staff are present to give a detailed look at the 2011-2012 Montville Board of Education budget.

Dr. Pam Aubin, Superintendent of Schools, thanked the Town Council for inviting the Board of Education to review the school system, its accomplishments and the investment the community makes each year in the school district. She introduced members of the leadership team who are present as they were an instrumental part of crafting the budget as presented. Mr. Brian Leveg?, Assistant Superintendent, Donna Maynard, Director of Special Services, Laurie Pallen, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Kathy Lamoureaux, Business Manager and Margaret Tripp, Administrative Assistant. From the schools, Chad Ellis, Principal of Montville High School, Tonya Patten and Jason Daily, Assistant Principals at the High School, Sheila Reagan, Principal of Palmer Academy, Eileen Richmond, Secondary Program Leader, MJ Dicks, Principal and Wil Kleinfelter, Assistant Principal from the Tyl Middle School, from the Elementary School, Laurie Karen, Jeff Newton from Murphy Elementary School and Mark Johnson from Oakdale Elementary School. She thanked all of them for all their hard work in crafting the budget.

Dr. Aubin presented a paper copy of the power point presentation to the Council members to follow along as she presented the slide show (a paper copy of the slide show as presented is available for viewing at the Town Clerk's office). Topics included in the slide show included Montville schools Board of Education goals for the 2010-2011 school year, budget priorities and guidelines, a review of new members of the administrative team, achievements of staff and students over the years, statewide recognition as a leader in improving school climate, academic achievements, successful extra curricular activities at the schools, the Governor's Reading Challenge at the Mohegan Elementary School, sports achievements, past budget history, revenue sources and percentage of expenditures from source, budget allocation, and increases and

decreases to this year's budget request. Dr. Aubin stated the requested budgeted request for the 2011-2012 Board of Education is \$36,789,691. This number represents a 1.43% budgetary increase over the current budget and reflects the anticipated reduction in teaching positions due to declining enrollment and the reduction of a special education position that was funded by a grant. The budget reflects the desire of the community to maintain class sizes and focus on funding services that directly impact the students and the budget is offset by the use of the Education Jobs Fund to reduce the financial burden to the community. The budget will not result in a reduction in forces since the positions eliminated will be absorbed through retirements and resignations. Increases in budgeted line items are the result of contractual obligations and rising energy prices and fixed costs. She urged the Council to support the budget as presented in an effort to preserve the tradition of the educational opportunities the residents of Montville have seen over the years. She stated the budget is a realistic budget that takes into consideration the hard economic times and the needs of the district. The budget does not request funding for any new programs or staffing and it focuses on maintenance of existing programs and serving the diverse student population of Montville. She stated the Mayor has proposed a one percent increase in the amount of \$362,700 and the Board of Education is requesting an increase of \$519,656 with a difference of \$156,956. She indicated the 1.43% increase as requested by the Board of Education is a reasonable and sensible request that ensures educational quality.

Chairperson Jacobson thanked Dr. Aubin for her presentation and asked if there was anyone from the public who would like to come forward to speak regarding the budget.

Ms. Dale Eichholz, 262 Connecticut Blvd, Oakdale, stated she has been a resident of the Town of Montville for over fifty years. She indicated she is not present to ask for a reduction in teachers or curriculum, but is asking the Council to consider a reduction of the Superintendent's staff because it is top heavy, there are two positions that could be eliminated and save the town approximately three hundred thousand dollars. She suggested the Council look at the salaries and consider if the administrative staff in the Superintendent's office are necessary. She stated the Superintendent is capable of taking care of what needs to be done in her office. She commended the school for the production of *Guys and Dolls* and stated the performance was superb and just as good as any Broadway show she has ever seen. She discussed the needs of the Chinese community and discussed civic responsibility, stating there are volunteers available to teach and help keep the taxes down.

Mr. Rocco Basilica, 7 Hunters Run, Oakdale stated he is a professional firefighter in New London and has worked there for twenty three years, his wife is a nurse manager at Yale New Haven Hospital. He has a sixteen year old son in the High School and a twelve year old son in the Middle School. He has confidence in the educators and the system that his children are taken care of in all aspects and he is satisfied as a tax payer. He is proud of the Montville Schools, stating his children come home with pride in ownership, they are proud to be Montville Indians; their education is second to none. He is happy with the knowledge his sons will be prepared for college when it is time for him to go. Both of his children are honor students. The choices the Board of Education staff has made have been good ones and they are supportive, the schools are safe and clean. He stated the teachers showed the community they care when they chose not to take pay raises this year to keep salaries down.

Ms. Karen Duhamel, 1 Fox Hollow Drive, Oakdale, spoke as a mother of a child in the Murphy School and one in Kindergarten. She stated she is a teacher in another district. She is proud to say her children attend a Montville school. The pride of our schools signs throughout the town reflects the values of the community and Montville's commitment to excellence in education. She urged the Council to pass the proposed budget so that the Montville Schools can continue to provide excellence in education and to all students. If the budget is not approved, class sizes will increase and as a teacher she knows the challenges that larger class sizes bring. Increasing class size can be detrimental to the children's growth as learners. She discussed the students with special needs and the reading program at the elementary school level. The individualized

reading instruction the student's receive enables them to flourish, and they receive enrichment as well as remedial assistance in a one on one situation. She urged the Council to reflect on the presentation by the Board of Education and to pass the budget as presented.

Mr. Jeremiah Ross, 41 Carol Drive, Uncasville, stated he moved to Montville in 1994. He is in the teaching field and understands leadership and responsible behavior. He has a fourth grader at Murphy School and stated the school is phenomenal with great teachers and staff. The dedication of the teachers and administrators is second to none, it is not a job to them, it is their calling and it shows in the recognitions the schools received. He recommends the Council approve the budget as presented.

Ms. Elizabeth Dumond, 24 Polleys Lane, a Montville teacher and a mother of two future students in the Montville School system. She discussed her decision to move to Montville; the state of the schools and property values. The budget presented to the Council is not asking for more than what is necessary and should be funded fully.

Ms. Carol Rowley, 93 Driscoll Drive, stated she is a citizen of Montville since 1970, her children went through the school system and they flourished in the system. She wants all the children who live in this town to enjoy the same education her children had the opportunity to enjoy. She is on a fixed income but is willing to pay the extra taxes because the children are the future.

Mr. Jeff Carver, 9 Lathrop Court Extension, Uncasville stated he is pleased with his son's school and the education he is getting there, his son loves his teachers and stated he is very satisfied with the presentation by the Board of Education. He requested an increase to the budget for alternative energy solutions, stating the energy prices are rising and would encourage the school systems to look at the use of alternative energy sources.

Ms. Lorie Marcavage, 64 Simpson Lane, Oakdale, stated she grew up in Montville with her four siblings. She returned to Montville when she started a family in 2001 and her children attend the Mohegan Elementary School in third and fifth grades. She stated the school is amazing and she is proud they get to go there. She discussed the proud of our schools signs throughout the town stating they remind her why she is in Montville and why she chose the town for her children's education. She does not feel the budget increase is asking too much and fully supports the budget as presented.

Ms. Betty Waselik, 36 Anderson Lane, Oakdale urged the Council to adopt the Board of Education budget as requested; she stated the town has wonderful schools and her children attended the Montville Schools. She stated her children were nurtured and education in the Montville system, they had wonderful mentors and teachers and they are all successful because they went to school in Montville. Teachers deserve all the tools they can get to do such a great job each and every day, she urged the Council to pass the budget.

Ms. Carrie Baxter, 40 Jermone Road, Uncasville, stated she is a parent of five children, three in the school system and two on their way, and she is a member of the Board of Education. She stated she is proud to support the budget and she voted on it and supports it. She stated the teachers love what they do and were willing to do what it takes to keep the budget down and she asked the Council to honor them and their decisions when considering the budget request. There are no new positions added and the Board has been aggressively seeking out grants to provide programs for the children. She is proud of the schools.

Mr. Kevin Fritch, 12 Morgan Street stated he fully supports a quality education system for the town but the quality of education is not a factor of how much money you spend on it, it is a function of the dedicated professionals that are running the system and teaching the children. He urged the Council to consider the reality of the economic hardship of the town specifically the senior citizens who have not seen a pay raise or Social Security pay raise in two years and many retirement funds have not gone up in two years and disability

benefits have not gone up in two years. The Mohegan Sun employees have had their wages frozen for many years and this past year the employees took a four percent cut in pay and management took a seven percent cut in pay. The unemployment in the town is at 8.5% and the people that are unemployed are worried about paying the mortgage. He urged the Council to consider last year's expenditures when approving the budget.

Mr. Joel Farrier, teacher and president of the Montville Education Association, 33 Corey Lane, Niantic, CT. He stated the teachers took a zero increase to salaries this year but this is not about salary, these are hard economic times. He discussed the impact teachers have on student's everyday lives and discussed conversations he has with his students on a daily basis. He stated education is the solution and the cure to the worst ailments. He is a proud son of a veteran and a proud American. He stated he teaches because this is the way he can serve his country. He discussed the one percent increase as requested by the Mayor, and stated leadership is not just being responsible, teachers give even when they get nothing in return and they will continue to give because they value the sign on the side of the road that says Proud of our Schools. Leadership is stepping up and doing what is right no matter what political party you are affiliated with and to get along with one another for the good of the town as a whole. He stated he is proud to work in Montville and urged the Council to approve the budget as presented.

Chairperson Jacobson inquired three times if there was anyone from the public who would like to come forward to address the Council regarding the Board of Education budget proposal for the fiscal year 2011-2012.

Councilor Buebendorf thanked everyone who came to the public hearing to speak regarding the budget and to listen to the speakers about the budget, stating it is a long day for everyone and she thanked the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education for putting together a reasonable budget request.

Councilor McFee thanked the Superintendent and her staff for attending the meeting and giving a presentation and stated he is proud of the Montville Schools and he has an eleven year old daughter who is a straight A student since third grade and that says a lot about the Montville School system.

Councilor Beetham thanked Dr. Aubin for a great presentation and stated he is proud of her and all the teachers in the school system. The budget as presented was negotiated and is fair to both the teachers and the taxpayers of Montville. He inquired regarding student population this year vs. last year and Dr. Aubin stated the student population is down one hundred students with current enrollment of two thousand six hundred and ninety students. Over the past five years the school is down about 6.9%, with a reduction of nineteen teaching positions not including the positions in this budget. She projected fewer kindergarten students in the upcoming years and the budget reflects this decrease. Councilor Beetham discussed the State education minimum requirements expenditures for Montville and Dr. Aubin stated she does not have that number because the MBR has to be passed again in terms of how it is being calculated. He inquired regarding how much money the Board of Education is expecting to receive from the State and Dr. Aubin stated the Governor has made a commitment to fund education through the Education and Cost Sharing Grant and there is legislative support for this to make up for the shortfall of 14.1% that was created from the stimulus three years ago. She understands the legislature is planning to support municipal aid in general and does not foresee increased money, but does not think there will be a shift in vocational schools over to the governance of the local education agencies that house them and does not think they are planning to move the educational services for the blind over to the State Department although there is some restructuring. She looks at it as level funded from last year. Councilor Beetham discussed tuitions and estimated revenue and expenditures over the past years.

Councilor Hillman thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting, and reminded everyone that Thursday night there will be a public hearing regarding the General Government proposed budget and urged anyone who can to attend. She stated she is a

product of Montville schools as was her father and his six brothers and sisters, her ten children are products of Montville schools and there are now six grandchildren in attendance at the Montville schools, from High School to the special needs pre-school. She is proud of Montville school system.

Councilor Murphy stated Superintendent Aubin did a great job with the presentation. He stated he is the representative from the Town Council to the Board of Education and attends almost all of their meetings. He finds them to be informative and he is amazed at the amount of work the schools do. The student representatives give a monthly report and it is amazing at all that goes on in the school system. He urged residents to attend the finance committee meetings and to follow the progression of the budget process. The Mayor has done an outstanding job keeping the budget as low as possible and it is now the job of the Finance Committee and the Town Council to determine the outcome.

Councilor Caron thanked the Mayor for working on the budget and keeping the numbers down, he looks forward to meeting with the Superintendent and the Board of Education on the Finance Committee. He is proud of the schools and he is proud of the teachers in the schools. He discussed the Read to Ride program and the great job the students did.

Chairperson Jacobson asked how much of the budget presented are the taxpayers of Montville actually funding minus the amount of State and Federal grants and other revenue. Dr. Aubin stated the slide showed 56.9% and she can get the numbers. She can not project the number because she is unsure how much of the requested budget will be adopted and she is unsure regarding the amount of money the State will contribute at this time. Chairperson Jacobson stated she used the revenue projections and took out tuition, special education, ECS grants and the number was thirteen million, five hundred and forty four thousand dollars that is subsidized and in reality the taxpayers of Montville are looking at a twenty three million two hundred and forty five thousand dollar budget. Dr. Aubin stated she has used the most recent data she has from the strategic school profile and that is not calculated because it is something learned retrospectively not prospectively and she has not idea how much the town will fund because they have not passed the budget yet. Councilor Jacobson stated the budget reflects a get what you need and not what you want budget and she has concerns regarding the Board of Education's decision not to receive money for Capital this year. Dr. Aubin stated in order to keep all that has been invested in staff development, hiring staff and maintaining quality education for students and keeping the dollars devoted to the students the Board of Education feels that they would rather forego capital improvements for one year instead of laying off and paying thousands of dollars in unemployment costs. The schools are in good shape and the town bought a bus that is less than ten years old that will get by and still maintain safety for the students. Chairperson Jacobson stated the Board of Education has made sacrifices for the budget as presented.

Mayor Jaskiewicz thanked the teachers and Board of Education members for their professionalism, stating it is appreciated under these conditions and hard times. He thanked the teachers for everything they do.

Chairperson Jacobson thanked everyone for attending the meeting and closed the public hearing at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Audrey Ulmer, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville