

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Agenda – January 19, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES

The Town of Montville will be utilizing a virtual FreeConferenceCall service for this meeting.

Please call number below to attend the meeting at:

[1-\(605\) 313-5935](tel:1-605-313-5935)

[PIN # 401237](#)

On March 14, 2020, Governor Ned Lamont issued an Executive Order 7B suspending in-person open meeting requirements, and to hold such meetings or proceedings remotely by conference call, videoconference, or other technology.

Link: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-7B.pdf>

For all publicly broadcasted meetings, public comment on agenda items or topics in accordance with the Town charter may be submitted in writing in advance or by live audio via FreeConferenceCall.

Written comments must be emailed to the Town Clerks Office at townclerk@montville-ct.org at least **1 working day in advance** (if the meeting is on a Monday the questions must be submitted by close of business the previous Friday).

Written comments may not be read in their entirety, but rather similar messages may be aggregated or paraphrased for submission to the Economic Development Commission.

Live audio comments may be made via FreeConferenceCall by calling from your telephone.

Comments will only be accepted at times designated for public comment by the Chair of the meeting. The Economic Development Rules of Procedure, decorum, timeliness and suitability shall be followed and enforced in the same manner as if the meeting were held in person.

1) Call to Order

Chairman Hewitt called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

3) Roll Call

Present were Commissioners Sierra Davis, Thomas McCarthy, Christopher Napierski, and Chairman Walter Hewitt. Also present was Town Council Liaison Colleen Rix. Absent were Commissioners Mickey Gillette, Heather Harris, Sheelagh Lapinski, and Town Planner Marcia Vlaun Town. A quorum was present.

4) Alterations to the Agenda -- *None*5) Remarks from Marcia Vlaun -- *None*

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

Chairman Hewitt asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

7) Desire to recruit Commissioners.

Chairman Hewitt welcomed new commissioners Sierra Davis and Thomas McCarthy and thanked them for joining. He stated the Commission was now fully staffed. Commissioner Davis said she and her husband moved to Montville with her parents and stated she was a graduate of New London High School. She explained that economic development is important allowing for growth and potential new business. She also said she listened to the complaints on the Montville Forum and decided to join the Commission. Commissioner McCarthy said his family moved to Town in 1998 where he graduated from Town schools. He stated he recently bought a house and has been a long-time Oakdale firefighter who also was tired of listening to complaints. Commissioner McCarthy then commented on the Commission having virtual meetings and noted some Town meetings were hybrid. He spoke of emails received from Town Clerk Katie Sandberg last July and September that said commissioners could meet at the Town Hall with invited guests. Chairman Hewitt said Commissioner Gillette had expressed a desire to meet virtually but said he was reluctant until he had gotten the vaccine. He said he had listened to Town Council meetings and thought it was difficult to understand what was going on. For now, he said the current meeting format works well and is safe. Commissioner Napierski concurred with remaining remote until he has gotten the vaccine. Town Councilor Rix said to go with whatever you are comfortable doing and to continue with the current meeting format for the time being. Commissioner Davis said she has been working remotely since March 2020 but does go to her office but said she was open to either format. Chairman Hewitt spoke to challenges of the hybrid model and spoke of Polycom devices that are designed to discern voices at close or long distances that the Town currently does not have. He also said the majority of the Commission preferred the current meeting format per the last discussion about it but said the matter would be tabled and revisited at a later time due to the increase in Covid infections. Commissioner McCarthy said he respected everyone's opinion; Chairman Hewitt said the topic would be tabled and kept under consideration. Commissioner McCarthy added that 25 could gather according to the information obtained from Town Clerk Sandberg. Chairman Hewitt there are usually no public present at meetings and attendance is

fewer than 25.

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

i) The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 21, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Napierski; seconded by Commissioner Davis to approve the Regular Meeting Minute of December 21, 2020. Discussion: none. Voice vote: 2-0-2, all in favor—Commissioners Davis and McCarthy abstained. Motion carried.

9) Unfinished Business

a) Montville real-estate properties for development

Chairman Hewitt reported on an email received from Melinda at seCTer, Active Needs on Connecticut's Sitefinders that she sends on occasion and referenced a search on a location for a self-storage facility for investment purposes. Commissioner McCarthy spoke of one on Jerome Avenue. Town Councilor Rix commented on a new facility being built on Leffingwell and others off of Maple and Star Road. Chairman Hewitt stated he would contact James Gillanders concerning the investment partnership opportunity. The Commission spoke about the property square footage being sought per Sitefinders. Town Councilor Rix asked if Chairman Hewitt or Commissioner Napierski could reach out to find out what is being sought. Chairman Hewitt said more research was needed to point interested parties to Montville. Commissioner McCarthy said he would contact Montville Auto; inquired about the status of the Roc-Ten property; and said the salt business at the State Pier was looking for a deep-water property that would be good for the Town. Chairman Hewitt spoke of a prior presentation for a marina/recreation site for the Town port area. He also said the port could accommodate a barge for salt. Commissioner Napierski reported on previous data on the port area whose depth was not deemed as being deep enough. Chairman Hewitt added Town Planner Vlaun had discussed the area in the past. Town Councilor Rix said nothing solid had developed for the Roc-Ten property; Chairman Hewitt agreed to contact Town Planner Vlaun about its status. He also spoke of the tax advantage and investment potential for a brown field referencing a new federal program introduced a year ago. Town Councilor Rix said she would reach out to the chair of the Planning & Zoning Commission on the dam and DEEP issues since he owns it.

b) New Business Report

Chairman Hewitt commented on two (2) new businesses on the report—EB Asphalt & Landscaping and Plan B Lawn & Landscaping. He said businesses are slow but steady even with the presence of Covid. Town Councilor Rix spoke of a new convenience store and smoke shop at the Grist Mill. Chairman Hewitt commented on not having access to a closed business report; Commissioner Napierski noted there was no accounting in place for closed businesses when discussed previously. Chairman Hewitt said there was no tax liability for a closed business; Town Councilor Rix said a lot of businesses and those at Montville Commons are corporations. Commissioner Davis spoke of the machinations of businesses through the Norwich Economic Council that requires checks and balances for opening and closing a business—to obtain a permit and meet with officials. In addition, the Council does not want similar businesses close together.

c) Business Survey – Heather

Chairman Hewitt said the survey was tabled due to Covid stating mailed surveys do not work

well and explained the desire to meet with businesses in person and get more information about them. Commissioner Davis spoke about her search for a business site in Town and her desire to stay on Rte. 32 where buses run and spoke of the lack of available space for conversions. Commissioner McCarthy spoke of affordable Rte. 32 locations—next to Nino’s, across from the Town Hall, and three (3) locations at Montville Commons. Commissioner Davis said she works with kids and required outside space, but some locations were too big. Town Councilor Rix commented on the representative from Londregan who spoke to the Commission on the area near the location of the Department of Labor and how difficult it was getting a business to occupy the space. Chairman Hewitt said there are some locations and lots available, but the cost per square foot for them were too high. He also said most want business already established. Town Councilor Rix commented on friends who bake and sell products who are looking for existing businesses with commercial kitchens available for use. Chairman Hewitt talked about the United Way having a Food Policy Council looking to purchase property in conjunction with the Gemma Moran Food Bank. He said it was spearheaded by a friend who has since passed but was unsure of its current status. Town Councilor Rix commented on businesses that had commercial kitchens—Beit Bros and a space at Montville Commons.

d) Chamber Business After Hours – Heather

Chairman Hewitt said this event had been tabled since Covid but said the Commission did purchase a membership that Town Councilor Rix confirmed. He spoke of an email from the Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce regarding a virtual breakfast to be held on Thursday, January 21 from 8:30 – 9:30 a.m. for an update on the economic climate. He also said the deadline for the Payment Protection Program (PPP) is March 31st on a first come first serve basis. Chairman Hewitt said he would forward the Chamber email to everyone.

e) New Business Report (*This Agenda item is a repeat of item 9.c.*)

10) New Business -- *None*

11) Report from Town Council Liaison

Town Councilor Rix said she had nothing to report. She welcomed the new members and commented on the great meeting.

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

Chairman Hewitt asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

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

14) Townspeople and Business Feedback

a) Proposed Recipients for Business Recognition Award

Chairman Hewitt said the award had been tabled due to Covid but hoped to bring it up for reconsideration in the summer. The Commissioners spoke personally of the Covid impact.

15) Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Napierski; seconded by Commissioner Davis to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m. Discussion: Chairman Hewitt said the next meeting would again be held on Tuesday. Voice vote: 4-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.