



# TOWN OF MONROE

## TOWN COUNCIL

### MEETING MINUTES

Session # 2024-03

Regular Meeting – Monday, February 12, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.

Meeting conducted in Council Chambers of Town Hall

& Remotely via Zoom

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Jonathan Formichella  
Vice-Chairperson Enid Lipeles  
Councilmember Vincent A. Duva  
Councilmember Jason Maur  
Councilmember Kevin Reid (remote)  
Councilmember Dona-Lyn Wales  
Councilmember Janice Persico

**ABSENT:** Councilmember Cathy Kohut  
Councilmember Sean O'Rourke

**ALSO PRESENT:** First Selectman Terrence P. Rooney  
Frank Lieto, Town Attorney  
Missy Orosz, Director, Parks & Recreation  
Paul Koorse, Director, Information Technology

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#### I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**Formichella** called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM and led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### II. ROLL CALL

**Formichella** took the roll call as noted above.

#### III. CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Approval of the minutes of the Town Council Regular Meeting held on January 22, 2024 (Session 2024-02).
- B. Approval of the Tax Collector's Request for Refunds, dated February 7, 2024, totaling \$75,112.65.
- C. Acceptance of the donations received for the following programs:
  - Community & Social Services: \$40.00
  - Edith Wheeler Memorial Library: \$629.00 & in-kind donations of 5 board games, 5 DVD's, 1 CD, 53 puzzles, 4 children's books and 2 telescopes.
  - Emergency Medical Services: \$14,802.00
  - Food Pantry: \$1,608.45
  - Project Warmth: \$1,028.00
- D. **Resolution #24-016: RESOLVED**, that Terrence P. Rooney, First Selectman of the Town of Monroe, is authorized to execute and deliver on behalf of the Town of Monroe, the following Performing Artist Engagement Agreements, as well as any associated documents by and between the following parties:
  1. James Healy - Mass-Conn Fusion Band
  2. Thomas Robert Simkewicz, Jr - Raise Your Hand

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the First Selectman is authorized to amend these agreements as may be necessary for, and limited to, the rescheduling of performance dates.

**IV. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 regarding various donations.
- B. Memo from the Tax Collector to the Town Council Chair dated February 7, 2024 regarding a Request for Refunds.
- C. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 regarding various Performing Artist Engagement Agreements.
- D. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated February 8, 2024 regarding various Performing Artist Engagement Agreements.
- E. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 regarding the Fairfield County Mutual Police Assistance Compact Agreement.
- F. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated February 8, 2024 regarding the Fairfield County Mutual Police Assistance Compact Agreement.
- G. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 the State of Connecticut DEMHS Supplemental Notice of Grant Award Agreement.
- H. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated February 8, 2024 regarding the State of Connecticut DEMHS Supplemental Notice of Grant Award Agreement.
- I. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 regarding the Hartford Healthcare Corporation Student Affiliation Agreement.
- J. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated February 8, 2024 regarding the Hartford Healthcare Corporation Student Affiliation Agreement.
- K. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 regarding the State of Connecticut FY 2024 Highway Safety Project Grant Application for Speed Enforcement.
- L. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated February 8, 2024 regarding the State of Connecticut FY 2024 Highway Safety Project Grant Application for Speed Enforcement.
- M. Memo from the Town Attorney to the Town Council Chair dated February 7, 2024 regarding the Wolfe Park Fees.
- N. Memo from the Town Council Chair to the Town Council dated February 8, 2024 regarding budget workshop meetings.
- O. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 regarding an appointment to the Inland Wetlands Commission.
- P. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 regarding an appointment to the Historic District Commission.
- Q. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 8, 2024 regarding an appointment to the Economic Development Commission.

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**Formichella** asked if anyone else in chambers or online wished to participate.

**Joel Leneker – 70 Huntingtown Road** – He noted that he had a couple of questions to be included in the record. Mr. Leneker inquired if the Town Council would consider opening the Charter this year. He stated that it has been a long time since it has been open, there are numerous grammatical issues, and there were questions on if the Tax Collector should be an elected or appointed position. Mr. Leneker stated that there are a number of other issues that could be added, one being is how the Planning Commission works, as thier current primary focuse is on zoning. Mr. Leneker urged the Council to consider a tax relief for senior citizen’s starting at 65 years of age, as they often donate their time, volunteer on Commissions and that the Town should work to keep the seniors in Town in an effort to avoid the expansive 99 house building projects. Mr. Leneker continued to state that an observation he has had is that the people who sit on the Dias representing different Boards &

Commissions should talk to the other members and let them know that logo polos, hoodies, and basketball shorts are not appropriate apparel for conducting business on behalf of the Town of Monroe.

**Charles Belinski – 358 Wheeler Road, Fairway Acres** – Mr. Belinski stated that windows had not been approved and the Chair is in control of the money and items that should be done are not done. Mr. Belinski noted that the Chair hired a property management company without a broker license. He noted that all of the paperwork from the former Director, included a wait list and since the list had been tampered with. Mr. Belinski stated that the Chair is doing whatever she wants and it was not right. He noted that the Selectman chose who sat on the Board, and that the previous Selectman was not qualified at that because he placed the current Chair. Mr. Belinski stated that the Chair had been nothing but trouble. He also noted that they did not have expenses before and now they have roughly \$6,000 a month in expenses because of paperwork etc., not being completed due to her negligence. Mr. Belinski noted that the Town Attorney was at the last Board meeting and the property management company was discussed. Mr. Belinski stated that the Chair should be relieved of her duties and someone else should be appointed. He noted that he has contacted the Attorney General regarding the property management companies' qualifications. Mr. Belinski noted that the unit next door to his has been vacant for four years and housing for seniors is rare. He noted that he wanted Council to be aware of the ongoing issues. **Formichella** asked if there was a current property manager besides the hired company? Mr. Belinski confirmed there was only the current company and stated that they were supposed to be hiring other companies. **Formichella** inquired if members of the community had been reaching out to any other State agencies that would have oversight. Mr. Belinski noted that he contacted the Housing Authority for the State and that the person he spoke with was not helpful. **Formichella** inquired if Mr. Belinski knew of anyone filing complaints with State agencies. Mr. Belinski noted that he had wrote to the State and spoke with Mr. Ramsey from the HUD office, but he had not received any updates. **Formichella** inquired if he had contacted the local State Representative and if not, to forward all of the information to the local State Representative for further assistance and attention from State authorities. **Formichella** noted that the Council would continue to advocate to successfully fill vacancies on the Board. Mr. Belinski noted that Attorney Lieto had been very helpful. **Rooney** stated that Attorney Lieto did attend the last Board meeting and noted that previously scheduled meetings had always been cancelled. **Maur** requested that the Selectman and Town Attorney keep the Council apprised of the situation and if there are any actions that the Council or its subcommittees could take.

**Formichella** asked if anyone else in chambers or online wished to participate. Hearing none, **Formichella** closed Public Participation.

## VI. APPOINTMENTS

**A. Resolution #24-017:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the appointment of **Benjamin Sabia (D)** of 22 Hemlock Lane to the Inland Wetlands Commission for a term ending February 24, 2024 and for a full term commencing on February 25, 2024 and ending on February 24, 2028.

**Motion by Maur** to adopt **RESOLUTION #24-017: RESOLVED**, that the Monroe Town Council hereby approves the First Selectman's appointment of **Benjamin Sabia (D) of 22 Hemlock Lane** to the Inland Wetlands Commission for a term ending February 24, 2024 and for a full term commencing on February 25, 2024 and ending on February 24, 2028.

### **Second: Lipeles**

**Discussion: Maur** stated Benjamin Sabia is a life-long resident of Monroe. He has a strong sense of community and commitment to environmental stewardship and actively engages in volunteer work. He has been involved in various community initiatives in effort to make a positive impact. Benjamin has a deep appreciation for the environment, particularly the intricate balance of natural ecosystems. Benjamin is eager to bring his environmental awareness to the community in an effort to ensure thoughtful decision-making and responsible management of Monroe's invaluable natural resources. This appointment fills the vacancy created by the resignation of Clark Gingras. **Rooney** stated that he did meet with Mr. Sabia and he was full of energy and excited to have a seat on the Commission. He will be a good asset to that Commission so thank you for bringing him forward.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Duva, Kohut, Maur, Persico, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Kohut, O'Rourke

- B. Resolution #24-018:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the appointment of **Nina Gagnon (D)** of 160 Pepper Street to the Historic District Commission - Alternate for a term ending July 1, 2028.

**Motion by Maur** to adopt **RESOLUTION #24-018: RESOLVED**, that the Monroe Town Council hereby approves the First Selectman's appointment of **Nina Gagnon (D) of 160 Pepper Street** to the Historic District Commission as an alternate with a term ending July 1, 2028.

**Second: Lipeles**

**Discussion: Maur** stated Nina has been a resident of Monroe for 10 years. She has been involved in many community events, most notably as a board member of the Monroe Playground Foundation, was the building captain of the Wolfe's Den Playground and volunteers at Stepney Elementary School and the Farmer's Market. Nina previously worked as a high school math teacher and is currently employed with the Monroe School District as a Building Substitute Teacher at Stepney Elementary. This appointment fills the vacancy created by the death of Edward Coffey. **Rooney** stated that he did meet with Nina and he had forgotten to thank her for her assistance at the Wolfe's Den and noted that her impact was greatly appreciated. **Rooney** noted that they did have a quick conversation regarding new people moving into the neighborhood and the importance of them understanding the historic limitations.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Duva, Kohut, Maur, Persico, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Kohut, O'Rourke

- C. Resolution #24-019:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the appointment of **Valerie Richter (U)** of 49 Nelson Brook Road to the Economic Development Commission for a term ending January 31, 2026.

**Motion by Maur** to adopt **RESOLUTION #24-019: RESOLVED**, that the Monroe Town Council hereby approves the First Selectman's appointment of **Valerie Richter (U) of 49 Nelson Brook Road** to the Economic Development Commission for a term ending January 31, 2026.

**Second: Lipeles**

**Discussion: Maur** stated Valerie and her family relocated to Monroe in May of 2023 from Arizona after diligently researching priorities in raising their family. These priorities included access to open spaces and opportunities to interact with nature along with the proximity to diverse and historic cultural hubs which prioritize education and learning throughout the Northeast. Valerie is an industrial water treatment engineer with a background in cell and molecular biology and owns a photography business which focuses on events and creative portraiture. She hopes that her professional skills will help support Monroe so that it continues to grow. This appointment fills the vacancy created by the resignation of Rick Smith. **Maur** noted how nice it was to have unaffiliated voters being included. **Rooney** stated that he met with Valerie and was impressed with her background and noted that she would do a great job on the Commission. **Rooney** agreed with Councilmember Maur, that if someone brings a specific set of skills to the table that they should be representing the Town.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Duva, Maur, Persico, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Kohut, O'Rourke

**VII. ACTION ITEMS**

- A.** Town Council Committee on Finance, Education, Health & Public Safety Matters – **Lipeles** noted they have not met since the last meeting.
- B.** Town Council Committee on Planning & Zoning, Public Works and Park & Recreation – **Duva** stated they had nothing new to report. **Formichella** noted that Councilmember Maur requested that our Parks &

Recreation Director, Missy Orosz provide Town Council with additional research regarding the municipal fees of non-residents from the surrounding area with regards to the use of the reservation system, specifically for the Pickleball courts. The request was based upon the Town Attorney’s letter of opinion in our Council packets this week. **Formichella** stated that regarding the Parks & Recreation Fee Schedule was partially approved at the last Council meeting. He continued to state that the unresolved matter of the fees related to the Pickleball courts, and that Council would like additional information which Ms. Orosz should provide through the First Selectman. **Formichella** stated that Councilmember Maur did have questions about expanding the use of the reservation system, such as including the basketball courts. **Formichella** noted that the request was considered by the Parks & Recreation Director, however there was no need to see that at this time. **Formichella** noted the Parks & Recreation Director would continue to evaluate.

- C. Town Council Committee on Legislative & Administrative Matters – **Reid** noted they did meet tonight and discussed six resolutions including the Performing Artist Engagement Agreements, the Fairfield County Mutual Police Assistance Compact Agreement, the State of Connecticut Supplemental Notice of Grant Award Agreement, the Hartford Healthcare Student Affiliation Agreement, and the State of Connecticut FY 2024 Highway Safety Project Grant for Speed Enforcement, all of which reached consensus. **Reid** noted they also discussed a Tax Abatement Application which reached consensus and will go before Council in the near future.
- D. Strategic Planning Committee - **Formichella** stated they have not met since the last Town Council meeting at which time they reviewed proposed capital projects. **Formichella** noted that included in the agenda this week, was the request for each Council member to consider which municipal department directors they would like to speak to during the budget workshops and asked councilmembers to email him by end of the business day on Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup> so they can get the departments scheduled. **Formichella** noted he would like to speak with Public Works and the Registrar of Voters. **Maur** noted that he would like to speak with Economic Development, Parks & Recreation, and Planning & Zoning. **Formichella** noted that after the First Selectman’s budget presentation on February 26<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Public Hearing held the following day in addition to a joint meeting with the Board of Finance.
- E. EMS Building Committee – **Rooney** noted that this was included in the First Selectman update.
- F. Open Space Preservation and Acquisition Committee – **Formichella** noted they have not met since the last meeting.
- G. First Selectman’s Update –First Selectman **Rooney** reported as follows:

**Operations Update:**

Department of Public Works

- A recent observation while traveling through Town revealed excessive litter on our streets. He requested that Public Works conduct a Town wide cleanup effort which resulted in over 15 truckloads of miscellaneous litter being removed from the streets. This was greatly appreciated. Thank you to Chris Nowacki, Director of Public Works and Bill Phillips, Assistant Director of Public Works for attending to this immediately.

Land Use

- Through several hours of meetings and discussions including Bill Holsworth, Director of Economic & Community Development, Kathleen Gallagher, Planning & Zoning Administrator, and Craig Hirsch, Director of Human Resources, there is intention to adjust job descriptions that better suit the growing applications and enforcement in the Land Use Department.

**Emergency Services Update:**

Upgraded Fire Protection Rating

- Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO), the leading supplier of data and analytics for the United States property/casualty industry, recently upgraded the Town of Monroe’s Public Protection Classification. Based on the independent assessment of Stepney, Monroe and Stevenson Volunteer Fire Departments, Monroe’s Emergency Dispatch Center, Aquarion’s Fire Hydrant and Water Supply System, and the Monroe Fire Marshal’s Risk Reduction Programs, ISO assigned the Town of Monroe a PPC rating of 4. Previously, the Town of Monroe had been rated a 5 on a scale

of 1-10, in which 1 is the best score achievable. According to ISO's latest report, only 16% of the over 38,000 communities across the country that were surveyed by ISO scored a better rating than the Town of Monroe.

**Capital Projects Update:**

EMS Building

- All of the Towns financial obligations have been satisfied with the EMS building. Therefore, the EMS Building Committee can be dissolved at this time. Thank you to all of those who were involved including but not limited to, Jacunski and Humes Architects; Brian Humes, Burlington Construction; Justin Giampolo, John Krazniewski, and Chris Decaro. EMS Personnel; Don Smith, Craig Rosenburg and Lisa Pane. Thank you to the Committee members for their dedication to this project during unprecedented times. Thank you, Building Committee members; Mike Vitello, Domenic Pannichia, John Brenna, David Orr, Robert Westlund, and John Ostrozewski. Thank you, JP Szredzinski for the acquisition of the \$500,000 STEAP grant for the State to complete this Project. Thank you to Ken Kellogg for creating a workable environment for this to proceed efficiently and for taking an interest in this capitol project.

St. Jude

- St. Jude is progressing with the applications being prepared for the subdivision of parcels.

Pepper Street

- Fencing has been installed. At this time, Grasso has submitted reports which are being reviewed by BL Companies prior to sending them to State of Connecticut.

**Rooney** noted that he added a line item in for cybersecurity and asked for Paul Koorse, IT Director to address Council. **Koorse** stated that they were looking into EDR solutions that would allow for active monitoring of high value assets to ensure we do not get breached. **Formichella** noted because it was a new line item, there may be additional questions within the budget workshops. **Maur** inquired if there was additional information available such as cost, cost analysis and the name of the program. **Koorse** stated that there was information but suggested not making the specific product public for security purposes. **Formichella** noted that eventually that name would be public. **Persico** inquired if this was something new, not replacing something we had done before. **Koorse** confirmed this was new. **Rooney** noted that he did have an experience high level individual from the Department of Defense come in and that individual stated that our IT Department was ahead of some Federal Agencies, so hats off to them and anything we can do to make things easier we want to do that. **Rooney** stated that this was a new program and we want to get ahead of the curve in protecting our information.

**Community Update:**

Hi Paws Ribbon Cutting

- Congratulations to the new owners Andrea Bacigalupo and Chris Gonzalez. I had an opportunity to visit this great new business located at 439 Monroe Turnpike and wish them luck. This establishment is very clean with a modern environment and pleasant staff. I am sure the community will support these great folks.

Girl Scout Mural

- "We Are Girl Scouts" Mural was on display in the Town Hall lobby. We were very happy to have the mural, and to support the Girl Scouts. The troop leader was appreciative and noted that by just putting the mural on display gave the Girl Scouts the recognition that their work can impact their community.

**STORM PREDICTED FOR TOMORROW SO PLEASE TRAVEL CAREFULLY**

**Maur** noted that Monroe did officially call no school for tomorrow and with respect to ribbon cuttings, requested that councilmembers be informed so they could attend. **Maur** also inquired to the Chair if any formal action was needed to dissolve the EMS Building Committee. **Formichella** stated yes, they just need the completed punch list and it would be on a future agenda.

**VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. None**

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Motion by Duva** to accept the following donations that individually exceed \$1,500.00:

Project Warmth:

- \$3,000 from Santa Energy Corporation (NAA Tax Credit Program)

**Second: Wales**

**Discussion: Rooney** thank you for these donations.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Duva, Maur, Persico, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Kohut, O'Rourke

- B. Resolution #24-020:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the Fairfield County Mutual Police Assistance Compact Agreement.

**Motion by Lipeles** to adopt **RESOLUTION #24-020: RESOLVED**, that Terrence P. Rooney, First Selectman of the Town of Monroe and Keith White, Police Chief of the Town of Monroe, are authorized to execute and deliver on behalf of the Town of Monroe, the Fairfield County Mutual Police Assistance Compact Agreement and any associated documents by and between the Fairfield County Mutual Police Assistance Compact Agreement for the mutual police assistance.

**Second: Wales**

**Discussion: Rooney** stated the Monroe Police Department had expressed a desire to join the Fairfield County Mutual Police Assistance Compact Agreement whereas, under Title 7-277a, Title 10a-156b(f), and Title 7-148cc of the Connecticut General Statutes authorize municipalities and institutions to enter into agreements for mutual police assistance. Under this Agreement, there was a regional approach to law enforcement, resulting in better coordination and less duplication of efforts. The Agreement also protects the safety and well-being of the respective municipalities. This matter was reviewed by the Town Attorney, who provided his opinion letter.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Duva, Maur, Persico, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Kohut, O'Rourke

- C. Resolution #24-021:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the State of Connecticut DEMHS Supplemental Notice of Grant Award Agreement.

**Motion by Lipeles** to adopt **RESOLUTION #24-021: RESOLVED**, that Terrence P. Rooney, First Selectman of the Town of Monroe, is authorized to execute and deliver on behalf of the Town of Monroe the Agreement and any associated documents by and between the State of Connecticut DEMHS, for the Supplemental Notice of Grant Award Agreement.

**Second: Maur**

**Discussion: Rooney** stated that as in prior years, the Town had the opportunity to receive funding from the State of Connecticut through the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program. Attached for reference was the Supplemental Notice of Grant Award for costs related to supporting all-hazards emergency management areas, which will provide funding in the amount of \$10,000. The agreement was reviewed by our Town Attorney, who provided his letter of opinion.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Duva, Maur, Persico, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Kohut, O'Rourke

- D. Resolution #24-022:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the Hartford Healthcare Corporation Student Affiliation Agreement.

**Motion by Lipeles** to adopt **RESOLUTION #24-022: RESOLVED**: that Terrence P. Rooney, First Selectman for the Town of Monroe is authorized to execute and deliver on behalf of the Town of Monroe, any

associated documents by and between Hartford Healthcare Corporation, for the Student Affiliation Agreement.

**Second: Wales**

**Discussion: Rooney** stated Hartford Healthcare System has been willing to provide our volunteer EMS students who are seeking their Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) certification, clinical instruction, fieldwork learning experiences, and supervision in their Facility's Emergency Department. The matter was reviewed by our Town Attorney who provided an opinion letter.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Duva, Maur, Persico, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Kohut, O'Rourke

- E. **Resolution #24-023:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the State of Connecticut FY 2024 Highway Safety Project Grant for Speed Enforcement.

**Motion by Lipeles for RESOLUTION #24-023: RESOLVED**, that Terrence P. Rooney, First Selectman of the Town of Monroe, is authorized to execute and deliver on behalf of the Town of Monroe, the FY 2024 Highway Safety Project Grant Application and any associated documents by and between the Connecticut Department of Transportation, for the Speed Enforcement Program for Municipal Police Department.

**Second: Maur**

**Discussion: Rooney** noted that once again, we have the opportunity to apply for grant funding to support speed enforcement. Attached for review and consideration is the application for the FY 2024 Highway Safety Project Grant Application for the Speed Enforcement Program. The terms of the agreement are included in the application for this grant to provide additional funding to cover the costs of special patrols under this program. The application was been reviewed by our Town Attorney, who provided his letter of opinion.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Duva, Maur, Persico, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Kohut, O'Rourke

**X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Formichella** requested that the First Selectman's office in consultation with the Town Clerks office, set a Public Hearing for February 26<sup>th</sup>, prior to the next Town Council meeting and then adjourned the meeting at 8:04 PM.