



# TOWN OF MONROE

## TOWN COUNCIL

### MEETING MINUTES

Session # 2025-06

Regular Meeting – Monday, March 10, 2025 – 7:00 P.M.  
Meeting conducted in Council Chambers of Town Hall  
& Remotely via Zoom

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Jonathan Formichella  
Vice-Chairperson Enid Lipeles  
Councilmember Cathy Kohut  
Councilmember Jason Maur  
Councilmember Sean O'Rourke  
Councilmember Kevin Reid (remote)  
Councilmember Dona-Lyn Wales

**ABSENT:** Councilmember Vincent A. Duva  
Councilmember Janice Persico

**ALSO PRESENT:** First Selectman Terrence P. Rooney  
Town Attorney Frank Lieto  
EWML Director Nicole Cignoli

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#### I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**Formichella** called the meeting to order at 7:09PM and led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### II. ROLL CALL

**Formichella** stated every member was present in person with the exception of Council Member Kevin Reid, who was remote.

#### III. CONSENT CALENDAR

**A.** Approval of the minutes of the Town Council Regular Meeting held on February 24, 2025 (Session 2025-04) and the Town Council Special Meeting held on February 27, 2025 (Session 2025-05).

**B.** Approval of the Tax Collector's Request for Refunds, dated March 5, 2025, totaling \$45,214.20.

**C.** Acceptance of the donations received for the following programs:

- Animal Control \$45.00
- Community & Social Services: \$788.00
- Edith Wheeler Memorial Library: \$525.00 & in-kind donations of a wireless mouse, toys for the preschool lab program, 10 books and 1 DVD
- Emergency Medical Services: \$7,802.00
- Farmers' Market: \$50.00
- First Selectman's Office: in-kind donation of tables & chairs
- Food Pantry: \$3,535.00
- Project Warmth: \$2,447.00

**D. RESOLUTION #25-033: 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 2025 Highway Safety Project

Grant Application and any associated documents by and between the Connecticut Department of Transportation, for the Distracted Driving High Visibility Enforcement Program.

#### IV. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated March 6, 2025 regarding various donations.
- B. Memo from the Tax Collector to the Town Council Chair dated March 5, 2025 regarding a Request for Refunds.
- C. Memo from Councilmember Maur to the Town Council Chair dated March 5, 2025 regarding budget motions.
- D. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated March 6, 2025 regarding the FY 2025 Highway Safety Project Grant Application for the Distracted Driving High Visibility Enforcement Program.
- E. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated March 6, 2025 regarding the FY 2025 Highway Safety Project Grant Application for the Distracted Driving High Visibility Enforcement Program.
- F. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated March 6, 2025 regarding the Connecticut Education Network Access Service Agreement.
- G. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated March 6, 2025 regarding the Connecticut Education Network Access Service Agreement.
- H. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated March 6, 2025 regarding the Stanley Technologies Allegion Access Agreement.
- I. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated March 6, 2025 regarding the Stanley Technologies Allegion Access Agreement.
- J. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated March 6, 2025 regarding the WMNR Job Description Updates.
- K. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated March 6, 2025 regarding the Proposed Amendment to the Elderly and Permanently Disabled Tax Relief Ordinance.
- L. Letter of Opinion from the Town Attorney to the First Selectman dated March 6, 2025 regarding the Proposed Amendment to the Elderly and Permanently Disabled Tax Relief Ordinance.

#### V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

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

#### VI. APPOINTMENTS

None

#### VII. ACTION ITEMS

- A. Town Council Committee on Finance, Education, Health & Public Safety Matters – **Lipeles** noted they had not met for a meeting in a while.
- B. Town Council Committee on Planning & Zoning, Public Works and Park & Recreation – **O'Rourke** stated that they had not met since the last meeting.
- C. Town Council Committee on Legislative & Administrative Matters – **Reid** noted they met prior to the meeting and discussed four resolutions and one proposed amendment. He noted that all resolutions passed for consensus to come before Council.
- D. Strategic Planning Committee - **Formichella** stated they had not met since the last meeting. He noted that Chairwoman Cardi reached out to schedule a meeting regarding the Beardsley property. **Formichella** stated there was a Facilities Adhoc Committee for the Board of Education Thursday and that he would provide an update at the next Town Council meeting.
- E. Open Space Preservation and Acquisition Committee – **O' Rourke** noted they have not met since the last Council meeting.

F. First Selectman's Update –First Selectman Rooney provided an update as follows:

**Operations**

Public Works

- Warmer weather has put road repair and public works functions in high gear. DPW has been busy repairing potholes, manhole covers, and damage from storm impact. My office with the advice of DPW has opened brush drop off for the month of March at the Garder Road landfill at no cost. Also, commercial companies with proof of removal from Monroe properties by residency verification can also use this option to help those citizens who do not have means to transport debris.

**Emergency Services Update:**

- Monroe Emergency Services have been steady with call volume. Fire, Police and EMS mitigated some significant accidents in the last few weeks due to high rates of speed. Our police have been doing regular patrol functions with traffic enforcement consistently being conducted.

**Capital Projects:**

Animal Control

- Our animal control facility is nearing the finish line. This project plan was reviewed and approved by Kelly Baker, the Chief State Animal Control Officer with Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Our town officials have spoken with Chuck Delarocco, Regional Inspector from the CT DOAG, to arrange a meeting this week to ensure full compliance. This will allow any necessary changes to be addressed before the final inspection, as per my request.

CCS

- Interior renovations have started inside the Community Center Site. As we move into warmer weather, the plans to connect technology from town hall to CCS are being configured with DPW, Building Officials and our Town Engineer. The excavation needed to connect the buildings will be conducted by town machine operators and highway staff. Once connected we will begin moving Parks and Recreation into their new home. Our Parks and Recreation Director Missy Orosz is eager for the move so she can champion revenue generating ideas and programming to make this new venture a success.

**Community Update:**

Rotary Club Blood Drive

- The Rotary Club held a Blood Drive conducted by Red Cross in honor of Tax Collector Deb Heim. Under the leadership of Former First Selectman Ken Kellogg, Monroe's Rotary Club contributes a significant amount of financial help to needs of the Monroe community.

St. Augustine's Church

- I attended and spoke at a breakfast at the Gaelic American Club in Fairfield along with many other community leaders. It was a tribute to Irish Heritage.

Binky Patrol

- Monroe is full of altruism and amazing people doing incredible things. Our beloved Edith Wheeler Memorial Library hosted the Binky Patrol of Southern Connecticut who handmade 101 blankets.

Eagle Scout Commendation

- I attended and awarded a commendation for Eagle Scout Andrew Cavanaugh this past weekend. Becoming an Eagle Scout is an impressive accomplishment, AJ is a credit to his troop and community.

**Grants:**

See below for a chart of what our Special Projects Coordinator/Grant Writer is currently pursuing.

**Grants Status**

Key: Grant Awarded Applied, awaiting decision Under Review Pending Paused Unavailable

Grant Name	Department	Grant Amount	Match	Project	Status
Active Transportation Microgrant Program	CT DOT	\$5,000	None	Bike Rodeo Giveaways R. Riber, B. Holsworth, H. Ramalhete (PD)	Awarded
Healthy Communities Grant	U.S. EPA	\$40,000	None	Geothermal Design Costs for HVAC at 709 Monroe Turnpike R. Riber, B. Holsworth	Applied Notification: 4/2025
PROTECT Grant	US DOT	\$1,981,000 \$1,584,000 (80%)	20% (\$397,000)	<del>Hammertown</del> Road Culvert Replacement R. Riber, J. DiMeo	Program Paused, waiting for re-posting, application is prepared
Section 5310 Grant	CT DOT	\$149,000 \$119,200 (80%)	20% (\$29,800)	20 passenger van for the Monroe Senior Center K. Cassia, A. LaChioma, R. Riber	Applied Notification: 1/2026
CT STEAP Grant	CT OPM	\$1,250,000 \$1,000,000 (80%)	20% (\$250,000)	Gym wall replacement 709 Monroe Tpk. B. Holsworth	Applied Notification: 4/2025
Brownfields Grant Program	CT DECD	\$1,010,000 \$808,000 (80%)	20% (\$202,000)	Remediation/removal of mold & asbestos in 709 Monroe Tpk. R. Riber, B. Phillips	Applied Notification: 6 or 7/2025
Public School HVAC Grant Program	CT DAS	-	-	3 <sup>rd</sup> round of applications and awards not expected	Unavailable
School Construction Grant Program	CT DAS	\$1M+	62.14%	Chalk Hill renovation Limited scope of activities funded Michelle Miller, B. Holsworth	Pending
School Safety Grant Program				Attending webinar on 3/18 for funding school safety initiatives	Under Review Upcoming
ARSL Grant	Assn. for Rural Libraries	Up to \$15,000	None	Upgrading LED lighting in Library N. Cignoli, R. Riber	Applied Notification 4/2025
Scaling Community Through Archives Project	Univ. of Washington	\$7,000	None	Digitizing Monroe's archives at EWML N. Cignoli, L. Bartlomiejczyk, RR	Applied Notification: 5/2025

**Grants Status**

Key: Grant Awarded Applied, awaiting decision Under Review Pending Paused Unavailable

Grant Name	Department	Grant Amount	Match	Project	Status
State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program	CT DEMHS	Varies	10%	Meeting w/P. Koorse on 3/14 B. Holsworth, P. Koorse, R. Riber	Under Review
CDS Program	CT DOJ	\$250,000	None	Police Bodycams B. Holsworth, K. White (PD)	Pending; Awaiting Congressional Budget
Summer Reading Grant	Dollar General Literacy Foundation	\$3,000	None	Summer Reading Program at EWML L. Obach, R. Riber	Applied Notification: 5/2025
Community Connectivity Grant Program	CT DOT	\$100 - \$800,000	None	Municipal construction projects that improve safety & accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists & transit users. Construction only, other fees considered match	Under Review
National Culvert Removal Replacement and Restoration Grant Program	US DOT	\$200,000 and up	20%	Meaningfully improve or restore anadromous fish passage through replacement, removal or repair of culverts or weirs	Under Review
Active Transportation Microgrant Program	CT DOT	\$5,000	None	Bikes, Etc. R. Riber, B. Holsworth, H. Ramalhete (PD) (Rolling Basis)	Pending
T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program	T-Mobile	Up to \$50,000	None	Shovel-ready projects – 709 Monroe Tpk. B. Holsworth	Pending
RAISE Grant	US DOT	Up to \$25,000,000	50%	The parameters were for larger regional projects	Reviewed Did not apply
High Energy Cost Grants	USDA			N/A for our town	Reviewed Did not apply
BRIC	FEMA			Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities	Currently Paused

**VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. None

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Acceptance of the following donations that individually exceed \$1,500.00:  
Parks & Recreation:

- \$4,509.07 from the Monroe First Foundation for creating a memorial plaque to be affixed upon the Pathway Pavilion and for future maintenance of the Pavilion.

Project Warmth:

- \$3,000.00 from Santa Energy (NAA Tax Credit Program)
- \$20,250.00 from Service Corporation International - Spadaccino's & Gallagher Funeral Home (NAA Tax Credit Program)

**Second: Lipeles**

**Discussion: Rooney** stated that the donations were greatly appreciated.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Kohut, Maur, O'Rourke, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Duva, Persico

- B. Resolution #25-034:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the Connecticut Education Network Access Service Agreement.

**Motion by Lipeles** to adopt **RESOLUTION #25-034: 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 Connecticut Education Network Access Service Agreement, and any associated documents by and between the Connecticut Education Network, for the Town's backup internet circuit.

**Second: Maur**

**Discussion: Rooney** stated that our Technology Director would like to connect Town Hall to the Connecticut Education Network as a backup internet circuit. This would allow Town Hall to be on the State's backbone fiber infrastructure and act as a backup if another internet service went down. The cost of this service would be \$158.00 per month which would be covered under the Information Technology budget. Our Technology Director noted that this would be a significant cost savings to have fiber run to Town Hall. The Agreement was reviewed by our Town Attorney who provided his letter of opinion. **Maur** noted that in L&A he had questions regarding the term of the agreement and the other was how Town Hall would be connected to the State fiber and that would be installed as part of the agreement with no additional cost. He noted there would be a greater cost savings not only in the present but also in the future.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Kohut, Maur, O'Rourke, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Duva, Persico

- C. Resolution #25-035:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the Stanley Technologies Allegion Access Agreement.

**Motion by Lipeles** to adopt **RESOLUTION #25-035: 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 Stanley Technologies Allegion Agreement, and any associated documents by and between Stanley Technologies Allegion, for the automatic door replacement at the Senior Center.

**Second: Wales**

**Discussion: Rooney** stated that our Director of Community & Social Services had been completing several facility updates at the Senior Center and had identified Stanley Technologies Allegion as an appropriate vendor to continue this effort by installing automatic doors on the Men's and Women's restrooms. He noted that this organization also installed and maintained the motors on the entrance doors. **Rooney** stated that the project would be paid from ARPA funding. Stanley Technologies Allegion had provided their Contract for the purchase, which was reviewed by our Town Attorney, who provided his letter of opinion.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Kohut, Maur, O'Rourke, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Duva, Persico

**D. Resolution #25-036:** To consider and act upon a resolution regarding the WMNR Job Description Updates **Motion by Lipeles** to adopt **RESOLUTION #25-036: RESOLVED**, that the Town Council hereby approves the following to be effective immediately:

- New part-time job description for Donor Relations at WMNR.
- New part-time job description for Communications at WMNR.

**Second: Maur**

**Discussion: Rooney** stated that in 2023 this Council approved a job description for a full-time Donor Relations & Communications position in WMNR which at that time had not existed. Kurt Anderson informed our Human Resource Director that they have been operating since 2017 with a combined part-time Donor Relations and Communications person. Kurt has requested to split the positions to two part-time positions due to the work skills needed.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Kohut, Maur, O'Rourke, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Duva, Persico

**E. Proposed Amendment to the Elderly and Permanently Disabled Tax Relief Ordinance**

**Rooney** noted that this was his first proposal to law. He stated that the proposed amendment would offer a tax relief ordinance for the elderly and permanently disabled. **Rooney** noted that the rising costs and record inflation continued to place an increased pressure on our elderly and permanently disabled residents, most of which relied on fixed incomes to support their housing costs. **Rooney** stated that Monroe had recognized the need to provide property tax relief to those valued residents for many years. He stated that the ordinance was last amended in 2007 rendering the qualifying income ranges outdated and inconsistent with the cost of living. **Rooney** stated that pursuant to Town Charter, Chapter III, §2, he hereby recommend that the Town Council consider his proposed legislative action seeking to amend Section 470-5(E)(2) of the Elderly and Permanently Disabled Tax Relief Ordinance to increase the qualifying income ranges so as to reflect the cost of living increases experienced by fixed-income recipients and provide tax relief to that portion of the population as intended while leaving in place the tax reductions as percentage of property tax and minimum reductions as set forth therein.

<u>Current Income Range</u>	<u>Proposed Income Range</u>
\$0 to \$23,600	\$0 to \$30,440
\$23,601 to \$32,700	\$30,440 to \$41,580
\$32,701 to \$47,376	\$41,580 to \$52,720
\$47,377 to \$55,850	\$52,720 to \$63,860
\$55,851 to \$60,000	\$63,860 to \$75,000

He noted that when considering the need for the changes, he conferred with numerous Town residents and the Director of Community & Social Services who emphatically support the amendment as presented. He stated that when considering the projected financial impact from these proposed changes, he consulted with the Tax Assessor and Finance Department and his proposed budget incorporated the same. **Rooney** stated that his proposed changes were presented to the Town Attorney to draft the proposed amendment and provided his letter of opinion approving same. **Rooney** respectfully requested that the Town Council discussed and reviewed his proposed amendment, and that the Chairman authorize the scheduling of a public hearing and final vote on the amended ordinance as provided in the Town Charter, Chapter II, §6 at the next meeting on March 24, 2025.

**Formichella** noted that this was brought to L&A that night. He stated that while no vote had taken place, there was a great discussion and questions from members about the parameters, how the Office of the First Selectman and Tax Assessor came to the ranges by looking at those who qualified in the past, as well as increasing the various categories and thresholds for those categories, and comparing them to surrounding communities. He noted that expanding these thresholds would expand those who qualify and provide a break for the most vulnerable members of the community. **Formichella** noted that Councilmember Maur made a great point of in the future reviewing the increase number of max

assessments adjusted number. He noted that this would provide us information to determine the impact to the municipal budget as well as the tax receipts we received. He noted that the Tax Assessor did a phenomenal job determining a max benefit situation. **Formichella** stated that the ordinance was not before Town Council tonight, and would not be voting on it, however he thought it was appropriate to gather a consensus to call for a public hearing on the proposed ordinance on March 24<sup>th</sup> prior to our regular meeting as well as to get input from the Board of Finance.

**Maur** agreed that there was great discussion in L&A and thanked the First Selectman for bringing the ordinance forward. He stated that it was great seeing this come to fruition.

**Formichella** noted the Public Hearing would be scheduled for March 24, 2025 at 6:45pm.

#### **F. Fiscal Year 26 Budget**

**1. Motion by Formichella** to adopt **Resolution #25-037: RESOLVED**, that pursuant to Chapter VIII, § 4 of the Monroe Town Charter, the Town Council approves the total FY26 Municipal Expenditure Budget of \$33,151,502.00, which is hereby forwarded to the Board of Finance.

##### **Second: Kohut**

**Discussion: Rooney** stated that he collaborated with everyone at a very high level and noted that the budget took a lot of energy and with a reevaluation year was more difficult. He noted that they had to make very tough decisions, but that everyone who had onus in the decisions was in the room. **Rooney** stated that the budget encompasses community concerns such as park and road conditions, as well as law enforcement. He stated that the budget was data and factual based and includes the opinions from citizens who have come to the office. He noted that he had never denied a meeting in his office.

**Rooney** stated that the budget considers everybody in the Town and that holistically it was a good budget for everyone. He noted that some may be unhappy but as a First Selectman, his budget affects everyone and had to take that into consideration. **Rooney** stated that he was confident in the budget and hoped that the body approved as well.

**Maur** noted that he had only one motion which showed a testament to how strong he thought the budget was and thought it was a well put together budget. He noted that there were areas that still needed review by the Board of Finance but that overall, he thought it was a strong budget and he strongly supported it. **Maur** noted he had one motion to make that would amend a few line items all in one motion.

**Maur** made a motion for the following amendments be made;

-Pg. 40. Reduce \$750 from line ending 153385 for office expenses

-Pg. 42. Eliminate line 153385 for office expenses in its entirety.

-Pg. 134. Reduce \$400 each from lines ending 153385 and 153390 for office expenses and operating expenses respectively

-Pg. 72 (with respect to page 169). Increase line ending 150620 for hr. wage adjustments for coverage of new library adult/teen library assistant position once it is created.

##### **Second: Kohut**

**Discussion: Maur** noted that the main part of the motion was for the Library position that was discussed at the last meeting. He noted that it seemed as if it should have been included in her budget and was a misunderstanding of how it was written out. He noted she was unaware it was not in her budget. He stated since the position did not exist yet, the best way was to put the amount into HR Wage Adjustments. **Rooney** noted that regarding the makerspace, he was having a creative conversation in the office and Kerry McAndrew, my office manager noted that a community had students working in the makerspaces. He stated that the concept of using the students from robotics and STEM who need volunteer hours in their Senior year would bring a nice and unique environment. He noted that he spoke with Joe Kobza about the idea and he was excited about the idea. **Formichella** stated that the First Selectman made a great point about the Library position and the desire to have more opportunities using the maker space. He noted that the utilization of our students covering the space was a step in the right direction for this fiscal year. **Formichella** stated that the cuts proposed by Councilmember Maur were unnecessary at this time but appreciated Councilmember Maur's intentions and due diligence with the proposed reductions. **O'Rourke** noted that he supported the First Selectman's

leadership on the budget and agree with how it was presented. He noted that he supported the creative remedy in regards to the makerspace position. **Wales** stated that regarding the motions, she liked the idea of putting the Library Assistant position in place with the opportunity for students. **Maur** stated he appreciated the comments. **Nicole Cignoli, Director of EWML** provided an update for the needs in the makerspace.

**Formichella** called for a vote on the amended motion by Councilmember Maur.

**Motion denied 2-5:**

Voting Yes: **Kohut, Maur**

Voting No: **Formichella, Lipeles, O'Rourke, Reid, Wales**

Absent: Duva, Persico

**Maur** made a motion for the following amendment be made;

Pg. 40. Reduce \$750 from line ending 153385 for office expenses

**Motion failed, there was no second.**

**Maur** made a motion for the following amendment be made;

Pg. 42. Eliminate line 153385 for office expenses in its entirety.

**Motion failed, there was no second.**

**Maur** made a motion for the following amendment be made;

Pg. 134. Reduce \$400 from line ending 153385

**Motion failed, there was no second.**

**Maur** made a motion for the following amendment be made;

Pg. 134. Reduce \$400 from line ending 153390

**Motion failed, there was no second.**

**Maur** made a motion for the following amendment be made;

Pg. 72 (with respect to page 169). Increase line ending 150620 by \$48,910 for hr. wage adjustments for coverage of new library adult/teen library assistant position once it is created.

**Second: Kohut**

**Discussion: Maur** noted that this could be for the purpose of Library or Park & Recreation position.

**Motion denied 2-5:**

Voting Yes: **Kohut, Maur**

Voting No: **Formichella, Lipeles, O'Rourke, Reid, Wales**

Absent: Duva, Persico

**Formichella** called for a vote on adopting **Resolution #25-037: RESOLVED**, that pursuant to Chapter VIII, § 4 of the Monroe Town Charter, the Town Council approves the total FY26 Municipal Expenditure Budget of \$33,151,502.00, which is hereby forwarded to the Board of Finance.

**Motion passed 7-0:**

Voting Yes: **Formichella, Lipeles, Kohut, Maur, O'Rourke, Reid, Wales**

Voting No: None

Absent: Duva, Persico

**Attorney Lieto** informed Council that items G and H were not ripe for discussion and asked to have those items tabled.

**G.** Pepper Street (Executive Session Anticipated)

**H.** VEMS (Executive Session Anticipated)

**X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**None**

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Formichella** adjourned the meeting at 8:12PM.

*Respectfully submitted by, Kerry McAndrew, Clerk*