

**Minutes
Special Town Council Steering Committee Meeting
March 27, 2017
Town Hall Annex**

1. The special meeting of the Town Council Steering Committee was called to order at 6:15 PM.
Present: Thomas Pope, Justin Trzaskos, Richard Williams, Julie Blanchard (arrived at 6:30 PM).
Also present: John Elsesser, Town Manager
2. **Acceptance of Minutes, February 27, 2017:**
Richard Williams moved and Justin Trzaskos seconded to accept the Steering Committee minutes of February 27, 2017. The following corrections were requested:
 - Page 3, second paragraph, 7th line: add the word “the” before “whole picture.”
The motion to accept the minutes as corrected carried on unanimous vote.
3. **Reports:**
 - A. **Committee Chair – Thomas Pope:** Mr. Pope indicated we have an additional reappointment to make that could be added to the agenda as item 5C. **Richard Williams moved to add consideration of the reappointment of Sean Butler to the Parks & Recreation Commission to the agenda as item 5C. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote.**
4. **Reappointments:**
 - A. **Economic Development Commission – Polsky:** Richard Williams moved to table this item. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote.
 - B. **Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Committee – Reilly:** Richard Williams moved to recommend the reappointment of Jennifer Reilly to the Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Committee, term to expire 3/1/2020. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote.
 - C. **Parks & Recreation Commission – Butler:** Richard Williams moved to recommend the reappointment of Sean Butler to the Parks & Recreation Commission, term to expire 1/1/2019. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote.
5. **Appointments:**
 - A. **CHS Walls Code Compliance Building Committee – Marchand:** Richard Williams moved to recommend the appointment of Eugene Marchand as the Board of Education representative to the CHS Walls Code Compliance Building Committee for an indefinite term. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote.
 - B. **CoventryVision Committee – Lamore:** Richard Williams moved to recommend the appointment of David Lamore to the CoventryVision Committee, term to expire 5/3/2019. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote.

C. CoventryVision Committee – Stone: Richard Williams moved to recommend the appointment of Laura Stone to the CoventryVision Committee, term to expire 5/3/2019. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote.

D. Economic Development Commission – Bilotta: Richard Williams moved to recommend the appointment of Kristen Bilotta to the Economic Development Commission, term to expire 2/1/2022. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote.

E. Parks & Recreation Commission – Rustic: Richard Williams moved to recommend the appointment of Nicolette Rustic as an alternate to the Parks & Recreation Commission, term to expire 1/1/2018. The motion was seconded by Justin Trzaskos and carried on unanimous vote. Mr. Williams asked how new appointees are notified. Mr. Pope replied they receive a letter from the Town Clerk's office

Julie Blanchard arrived at the meeting at 6:30 PM.

6. Consideration/Amendment to Land Use Fees Ordinance:

The Committee reviewed an updated memo from Eric Trott, Director of Planning & Development. Thomas Pope said there has been an increase in these types of requests this fiscal year and if we don't collect enough fees then the taxpayers are subsidizing. John Elsesser said a number of years ago we were working with Inland Wetland Agent Todd Penney to try to make as liberal use of staff time as possible. But we still have to put ads in the paper. We absorbed costs we should be passing on. He offered to develop a document comparing our fees to neighboring towns. Mr. Pope said he is not so much concerned with a comparison but would at least like to cover our costs and maintain competitive rates. Mr. Elsesser will draft some information for review. Richard Williams asked how much you think we were losing. Mr. Elsesser replied this year we will go over about \$3,000k in legal advertising. There were a lot of small projects, which may mean that people are investing in their homes with swimming pools, etc. You don't have to go too far in our town before running into wetlands.

7. Complaints Regarding Snow Removal on Private Roads:

Thomas Pope distributed document about where we stand at this point (*attached to minutes*). He made the following statement: "Town staff has provided the Steering Committee with input that requires action to address the concerns of citizens and the interests of the Town in the entirety in response to complaints of appropriate snow removal. We must evaluate the requests and delivery of service without consideration for emotion or frustration but with full consideration of the responsibility of the Town and the risk involved.

It is apparent that all the roads in question do not meet the standards to provide working conditions for our Public Works Department to operate within their normal level of procedure for snow removal. The substandard conditions are having significant impact on performance as well as risk to equipment and personnel.

The conditions of the roads have deteriorated to a level that these roads now require special equipment, longer work time and increased risk of damage to equipment. The deterioration was preventable and is correctable but neither the prevention nor the correction was or is the responsibility of the Town of Coventry.

The fact that each of the "thoroughfares" be they roads, trails, or shared driveways are private and not legally accepted Town roads must carry weight in any deliberations. The maintenance, risk, and responsibility for private property rests not with the Town but rather with the title holder of the property.

While the Town has in the past made an accommodation to adjust snow removal routes in an effort to provide a minimal level of service to some private roads, it has refrained from providing such service to other thoroughfares with perhaps more homes or a longer distance to plow. The expectation of gratuitous service for private roads must be at a minimum tempered by the conditions of the road in question.

When a level of service raises above a mere accommodation to a level that requires a greater risk of damage or elevates the allocation of Town assets to extraordinary levels, that service must be constrained to protect the interest of the Town in the entirety. Town policies must at times be adjusted for conditional changes so they reflect the best interest of the Town."

Mr. Pope opened the floor for discussion. Richard Williams said he thinks Public Works did a remarkable job considering the amount of snow that dropped in a short period of time this winter. When he went down Rt. 31 & 44 to get to work it wasn't a lot of fun. He doesn't really travel the private roads in question. If they are private and not up to standard for our equipment to plow, doesn't that put our equipment and employees at risk? Mr. Pope replied yes and some of these roads only serve one home. How is that different from a driveway? Mr. Williams said it comes back to the Town Manager and what he thinks. John Elsesser said this has been an issue in the past and for a while it was ok. Now it is not ok and we are getting to the point where we will damage equipment or property. He is of the opinion that one-house roads are essentially driveways. In the past we have sent a notice to the neighborhood associations with a list of work that must be done if they want us to continue to plow. Justin Trzaskos asked if we have gotten compliance when we sent these notices before. Mr. Elsesser said neighbors on Hinman and Lamotte got together and did some work but now it is bad again. This year the roads were spongy and in one area the neighborhood put in millings but did not roll it out, and that is bad too. The association for the Hinman and Lamotte Road area went bankrupt so ownership is not clear. The Town refused to take those roads. Some of the other roads are in the Pine Lake Shores area. These subdivisions have public roads for their associations. We have some level of responsibility to plow for police and fire response. Mr. Williams asked if there are other roads in these associations that don't have problems. Mr. Elsesser said yes, like Pine Lake Shores. There are matching funds in the budget in the amount of \$2,000 for improvements to association roads – he is proposing to go to \$3,000. Mr. Williams asked what Mr. Elsesser would recommend. Mr. Elsesser replied that we tell the associations we have discussed this matter with the Town Council and road standards must be brought up for us to plow. Mr. Pope agreed. He asked if something ever happens like a collision with a pedestrian/plow, could it be brought into question why the Town was there. Mr. Elsesser said it is a little unclear, so it could come up. A precedent has been set for plowing these roads, so nobody is going to be happy no matter what. Mr. Trzaskos asked when these things grandfather so the Town would no longer be responsible. Mr. Elsesser replied we have been doing them a long time. We did not do some roads like Beebe Camp and Hinkle Mae. They were combined into one road and fixed. He will draft a notification letter and bring it back to Steering for review. Mr. Trzaskos asked about a timetable for compliance, saying we should probably send the notification in the spring. This matter will be reviewed by the Steering Committee again at their next meeting.

8. Adjournment:

The motion was adjourned at 6:44 PM on a motion by Richard Williams, seconded by Justin Trzaskos and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone
Town Council Clerk

Conditions, Impact and Commentary on Snow Removal and Private Roads

Group A (5 roads)

1. Ridgewood Trail
2. Wood Trail (off Catalina)
3. Elm Trail (off Forest, 1 house)
4. Cheney Lane
5. Oak Trail (Pine Lake Shores)

Current Conditions

- "Soft rutted gravel/millings roads with a poor base "

Condition Impact

- "the only way these roads can be plowed effectively under current conditions is with a bucket loader"
- "very difficult to plow at a high level of service with a pickup or 1 ton truck"
- "I understand the frustration that is experienced by the taxpayers that live on these roads but the reality is that due to the condition of the roads they cannot be plowed with conventional methods to a degree that is acceptable."
- "Will most certainly impact cleaning of the sidewalks and schools"

Group B (2 roads)

1. Lamotte
2. Hinman

Current Conditions

- "poor condition"

Condition Impact

- "we are going to break equipment if we keep plowing them in their current condition"

Group C (1 road)

Current Conditions

- "rutted"

Condition Impact

- "cannot be cleaned in the wheel tracks to allow travel by car"