

**Minutes
Coventry Town Council Meeting
June 6, 2016
Town Hall Annex**

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
Present: Hannah Pietrantonio, Lisa Thomas, Richard Williams, Julie Blanchard, Thomas Pope, Andy Brodersen, Matthew O'Brien
Also present: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Beth Bauer, Finance Director
2. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **Audience of Citizens:** none.
4. **Acceptance of Minutes, May 16, 2016:**
Motion #15/16-385: Thomas Pope moved to accept the minutes of the Town Council Meeting of May 16, 2016 as written. The motion was seconded by Matthew O'Brien and carried with Richard Williams abstaining and all other members in favor.
5. **Consent Agenda:**
Motion #15/16-386: Lisa Thomas moved to accept the Consent Agenda, seconded by Hannah Pietrantonio. Richard Williams requested to remove item 6.F.4. Matthew O'Brien requested to remove item 9.C. Lisa Thomas requested to remove item 9.B. The motion to accept the Consent with the requested items removed carried on unanimous vote.
6. **Reports:**
 - A. Council Chairwoman - Julie Blanchard:** We had a successful opening day at the farmers' market. We are continuing to follow the crumbling concrete issue with the Governor and he is proposing a new bill to go into effect 10/1/16. The bill only addresses a small portion of the issue - does it address what we are signing tonight? John Elsesser replied no. The House and Senate passed the bill and the Governor signed it. It allows reductions in assessments. Julie said it also sets a requirement to keep a record of who poured the foundation. John said it also cloaks the condition for period of up to 7 years so people don't have to disclose if they choose not to.
 1. We have received a letter from the Booth & Dimock Memorial Library indicating their intent to transfer ownership of the building and land to the Town in conjunction with the expansion project. Julie asked if Council members had any questions. Hannah Pietrantonio asked about the last paragraph where it says "supported by reasonable financial assistance by the Town" - does that mean maintenance? John Elsesser said he believes it means a correlating document needs to be developed that will clarify some items - it will never be definitive because we can't take away the will of the public to fund certain things. Matthew O'Brien said he would like to discuss the second paragraph - "funding sufficient to develop the project as specified by the building committee"- if we propose changes to the project does this mean it goes away? John said Julie had asked that this go on tonight's agenda but was anticipating it would go back to Steering for review. Matthew suggested that perhaps Steering could look at some of those items. John replied that is why it was under reports and not an action

item.

2. We got some answers regarding the time commitment for a Council representative for Board of Education union negotiations. The meetings could be 4 hours long but no specific dates are scheduled as yet. She would like Matthew O'Brien to serve along with an alternate. Thomas Pope offered to serve as the alternate. Matthew suggested the Council come up with some guiding language. Julie replied our role is as an observer. Matthew said if he is just going to watch he doesn't see why he is going. Lisa Thomas said she thinks the purpose is so someone can attend and let the Council know in executive session how the process is going. Matthew noted their invitation letter says the Council will be given an opportunity to provide input. Andy Brodersen said it makes no sense if we can't provide input. Matthew said he thinks the Council should discuss our own ideas so whoever goes has some sense of the Council's wishes. The Council agreed to discuss the matter further in executive session. John Elsesser said the Council does have the right to share how they hope things will come out although they can't participate in the actual negotiation. Matthew said he understands that.

B. Council Members:

Lisa Thomas said she and Hannah attended the lake management plan workshop. It was very productive. There are a lot of dedicated people who have been trying to put something together that has never existed before. There was good turnout and good discussion. John Elsesser and Eric Trott also attended. Thanks to the Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee for coordinating the event. Congratulations to the Parks & Recreation Department for our 6th annual Playful City designation. Kudos to them for putting the application together. Laidlaw Park is looking great.

Hannah Pietrantonio attended the Coventry Scholarship Foundation awards event. The Town Council gave achievement awards to:

- Citizenship – Abbie Zadrozny
- Leadership – Joshua Remes
- Achievement - Jessica Hatt
- Sportsmanship – Kevin Bishop
- Service – Olivia Thomas
- School & Town Spirit – Kayla Choiniere

Congratulations to all our Coventry seniors graduating from high school this Saturday. Lisa Thomas said it is astonishing what the committee running the scholarship program is able to do. They distributed over \$40,000 in scholarship funds and it is a great service to the Town.

Hannah said the new parking system for the Farmers' Market is working well. The former entrance is now the exit and it is better organized.

C. Steering Committee - Thomas Pope:

The Committee met May 23rd. The Library Building Expansion Committee updated us on their progress concerning the issue of ownership of the Library building and land. The Town Manager said that the Town Attorney may have some feedback when the letter of intent concerning the issue is received from the committee. The issue of sewer capacity in relationship to the library was raised due to discussion at the WPCA in their meetings of April 7th and May 5th about insufficient capacity to facilitate additional development at this time.

The issue of acceptance of Avery Shores as a Town road was discussed, including rights and

width of an easement to be included with any acceptance of the road to facilitate the use and maintenance for the road. While there was some objection to conveying the existing easement held by the Association, no Association member present had read or knew what was actually in the existing document. The Steering Committee asked for more information from Town staff regarding what they would require to be done prior to acceptance. The suggestion was made that a proposed easement could be drafted by the Town for Association review and possible edit. We would like to bring this matter to a conclusion prior to September.

1. Reappointments:

A. Eastern Highlands Health District - John Elsesser:

Motion #15/16-387: Thomas Pope moved to reappoint John Elsesser to the Eastern Highlands Health District, term to expire 6/7/2019. The motion was seconded by Richard Williams and carried on unanimous vote.

2. Appointments:

A. Building Code Board of Appeals - Kathy Fournier:

Motion #15/16-388: Thomas Pope moved to appoint Kathy Fournier to the Building Code Board of Appeals, term to expire 6/1/2021. The motion was seconded by Matthew O'Brien and carried on unanimous vote.

B. School Building and Energy Efficiency Building Committee - Danielle Kloster:

Motion #15/16-389: Thomas Pope moved to appoint Danielle Kloster to the School Building and Energy Efficiency Building Committee for an indefinite term. The motion was seconded by Lisa Thomas and carried on unanimous vote.

D. COVRRRA - John Elsesser:

We are wrapping up the tipper barrel swap program and getting bills out. We are waiting for the first draft of the transfer study report from the engineer. Matthew O'Brien said he would like the Council to have a future discussion regarding changes in budget allocation and how they occur at a future meeting.

E. Town Manager - John Elsesser:

1. Projects update: A written memo is available in the Council packet. Updates include:

- The grass at Laidlaw Park is growing. Nature is cooperating. We are finishing up the water tank. We are flushing out the tank and hooking up electrical and should be ready in about a week. It will take pressure off the well because the tank can fill slowly. Hannah said she was walking there and some people were questioning where the water is coming from - they live on Woodmont and are concerned. John replied their wells are part of CT Water and not the source for this. The tank is on its own well and it is a fairly high-yield well. Matthew asked if there are any continuing problems with ATVs and whether we should do temporary fencing to protect the field. John replied we haven't picked up the fence because it has been too wet. Protective fencing is a legitimate concern and we will talk further about it. We are trying to get the gate locked more frequently but there are always ways to get in.
- Thomas Pope asked about the tax sale section of the written update. We accepted one - what happened to the other? John said it sold. The other property had a CDBG loan of \$16,000 which could have been liquidated. We could have held it but decided it was close enough.
- Matthew asked under the public safety section of the written update, if our original authorization with Vintech authorized more than 3 days a week prior to June 30th. John

replied that was done by a vote of the Fire Department's Board of Directors - they hold the license. The contract with Vintech is with us - they asked us to do it because they couldn't get coverage. They hold the funds and the license - we don't. It is coming out of their money. We can get a legal opinion if the Council wants. Matthew replied that is not necessary.

- The pad for the gazebo has been poured for the Main Street project.
- A used Quint fire apparatus is available - the town mechanic is going to look at it tomorrow. It is well maintained and well below our budget at \$200,000 vs. \$400,000. There are two other towns interested. We signed a letter of intent. If the Council doesn't wish us to make the purchase we can pull it back but they told our staff we could provide a letter of intent subject to a contract to be approved by the Town Council - they will accept a letter. The vehicle has a tighter turn radius which should work well in our lake area. Thomas Pope asked if the Council can do anything to facilitate this seeing as how the price is good. The purchase is already approved in the budget. John said we can try to have a contract available for the next Council meeting on June 20th. We want a firm price or at least a not-to-exceed. Andy Brodersen noted this was discussed at the Local Emergency Coordinating Committee meeting. The Fire Departments are very happy with it - it is better than expected and comes with water.
- We were notified today that the Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee received the CRCOG sustainability award that we nominated them for - they are getting the award on Wednesday. CRCOG was thrilled with the lake study and hands-on monitoring that was done.

2. Coventry Crime Statistics: Five-Year Trend: Andy Brodersen asked how Coventry compares to other towns of similar size. John replied it is very hard to compare because with a more active Police Department you have more incidents. There are certain expectations when you live in an area with a resident trooper that you won't get as much activity. Andy said Coventry seems to be moving in the right direction. Thomas Pope said it is interesting that almost everything is down - but he noted the total of fraud and how fast it is climbing - it has almost tripled. He cautioned people to be careful with their financial records. John announced that the NCFVD is holding a document shredding day on June 18th from 9 AM to noon.

3. High Risk Rural Road Horizontal Curve Signing Grant: Andy Brodersen asked to verify that this is not costing us any money. John replied no, just frustration and time. Thomas Pope noticed a lot of the signs are on Brigham Tavern – we just had a bike tour there. John replied those were not approved we are asking that they reconsider.

4. Board Of Education: Decision Regarding Participation in OpenGov: Richard Williams asked for this item to be removed from consent. If he recalls correctly during budget season Robert Carroll said they were going to get involved in the OpenGov program for financial reporting transparency. It is a mystery how their money is spent. He remembers when he was on Finance he would ask for check registers because it was the only way he could see where they were spending. He thought the purpose of this was so everyone could see how things are being spent and he is stunned the Board is passing up this opportunity to be transparent. We should be able to see how things are spent and if it requires a check registry or copy of an invoice we should request it - under FOI if necessary. This was supposed to show everyone how things were spent. He wants to see a check registry. This has to come to a head. It is very frustrating. Julie Blanchard said she will ask for it. Richard said he wants to see it monthly. Thomas Pope said it would seem that the Town Council could submit an FOI request. The State provides guidelines and even if the Chair has to make a monthly request then we should do it even if Board of Education doesn't like it. Andy Brodersen said he recalls

even before we approved the budget we were talking about OpenGov with them. Did they budget any money for it? Hannah Pietrantonio said the budget was probably already set back in December so it wasn't put in. Richard asked how much it costs to get transparency. John asked Beth Bauer if she recalls. Beth said the last quote for the services we are currently using including the Board of Education was roughly \$8500 and a start-up fee of \$4500. Richard said we spend \$27 million and they can't come up with \$6,000 so we can see how money is spent and take the mystery out. If it can't be like that let's get a check registry every month. How do we get it done? Julie said she will start with an FOI request.

10. CRCOG Inter-town cooperation award: Our Recreation Director Wendy Rubin coordinated a group of towns to do a youth basketball league to offer expanded offerings in an economic way and the collaboration is being recognized.

7. Unfinished Business:

A.15/16-97: Invitation to Provide Input to Negotiation Process, Coventry Board of Education and Education Association of Coventry and Possible Selection of Council Representative: Julie Blanchard said that Matthew O'Brien will participate in this process and the Council will discuss guidelines during executive session. Thomas Pope will serve as alternate. Matthew said he appreciates the alternate because without a set schedule he doesn't know if he can commit to every meeting.

8. New Business:

A. 15/16-98: Consideration/Possible Recommendations: Resolution Encouraging Development of Multi-Faceted Approach to Assist Citizens Affected by Crumbling Concrete Foundations: Julie asked if John Elsesser was able to get any input. John said yes. Last Monday four towns held a meeting with the Lt. Governor and DCP Commissioner Jonathan Harris. They were given a courtesy copy of the draft resolution and were asked to get any concerns or issues to us - we haven't heard anything yet. There were some concerns about a resolution vs. a letter. While State work is important a lot of work needs to be done on a personal level. Julie asked how this was created. John replied the Town Manager in Windham did the first draft, which was then worked on by the Town Manager in Tolland and me. Matthew O'Brien said he is in favor of the concept but a little concerned about the lack of specificity regarding support. Will there be a pathway for people to follow that outlines types of assistance and costs? He also has a concern about conveyance taxes - he doesn't think individual homeowners or taxpayers should have to pay extra to cover it. He is in favor of developing uniform methods, pricing, etc. What is the possible impact on septic systems? Have there been some problems? John replied the concrete company poured a lot of septic systems and they are underground so they are difficult to see. Some have collapsed.

Hannah said she has spoken with some individuals who are directly affected and there is still concern about anonymity. One person who is having their home repaired wants to know what guarantee will they have when they put it back on the market that their value will be restored - will there be a post-repair inspection, or some other certification that indicates their repair is sound? Julie said there is a fair amount of language about assessors being trained to bring values down and back up. Matthew said he is hoping they would be able to provide details about what was being done. New concrete wouldn't be a problem. Lisa said that is part of the concern - is it possible to have some sort of certificate issued, or guarantee that the house is sound. Matthew said maybe people could get a warrantee from the company

doing the work. Hannah said there are only a few companies that know how to do it and they are booked years out. The people she talked with did say the draft was well written and well thought out.

Thomas said regarding the resolution there are a lot of things that are important to be in there but he has some concerns about the 3rd, 4th and 5th paragraphs. Matthew suggested revising the word "interim" which means temporary. Thomas suggested revising the language that says "strongly urges to establish emergency repair fund" to "urge investigation of the establishment of an emergency repair fund." In the third paragraph where it says "take immediate action to protect your legal rights" - it leaves the action open to interpretation. Does that mean they can sue the town or state - are we funding a method to get sued? Things get to court and the contractor could be out of business. He does feel people need help. This shouldn't be ignored - people need to have someone in their corner. Regarding the tax panel - where it says, "set out recommendations as defined above" - we need to be careful about what that wording is. We don't want to open a floodgate or be irresponsible.

Hannah said she thinks this is just the tip of the iceberg. Only 250 people are registered with the Department of Consumer Protection. There are hundreds of people who are too scared to come forward yet. We are talking thousands of homes. One family is facing a \$100,000 repair bill and their home is only worth 40% of what it was. She heard some discussion of FEMA - are they getting involved? John replied it doesn't meet FEMA's standard definition but an actual number doesn't exist. Having the problem exist in more than one state actually helps. It is more towns than just the four we worked with. Vernon, South Windsor, Ellington, and more also have the problem.

Thomas said people think the problem doesn't affect them but every homeowner in the communities affected will have to share a greater burden. The grand list will drop down. The cost of relocation is enormous. We can't kick this down the road. Something like this needs to be addressed but we need to do due diligence. He doesn't think we can sign it in its present form.

John said some of the thoughts at the end of the document came out of the meeting with the Lt. Gov. and Commissioner Harris. We believe the state isn't going to be the body that holds this tax force. We need legislators and senators as champions, but we believe it is going to have to be town leaders running this. If we are going to be talking about assessments we need to get OPM involved and they didn't realize that. We think it will be spearheaded by Councils of Governments. The task force should be listed in the beginning rather than the end, with a list of items to address. Thomas asked why we should do a resolution for the state if it is going to be managed by the towns. John said we believe we need significant state empowerment. We can talk with other towns to refine this. We need something in the interim - the state's focus is to finish their report and we think we need something sooner. Perhaps a type of disaster relief mobilization - volunteers who can help counsel, and ways to help people on a personal level.

Julie said she appreciates CRCOG and the task force involving the towns. She doesn't have a lot of faith in the state under the current leadership. Regarding the financial impact study - to what end would that help? John replied at some point this is going to require someone to come up with money. The state will not confirm that negotiations are going on with insurance companies and banks. It is not unrealistic to expect that state tax credits may come in, or maybe federal money. There might be a shopping list of things that have to happen. There were cases in Florida with poisonous sheetrock that were covered. Regarding an

economic study - we think someone has to look at impacts, not only to homeowners, but to towns and regions. If we become red-circled, everybody's house value is affected. If they do a model that shows potential impacts to property values and the real estate market, it makes the case that it is worth making the investment to try and fix the problem. To get state bonding we have to get votes from the whole state and historically Eastern Connecticut doesn't have that clout. We don't have the population numbers.

Julie said we will leave this matter on the agenda for next meeting. John will do further work on it.

B. 15/16-99: Consideration and Possible Action to Call to Special Town Meeting on June 20, 2014 to Consider Purchasing Land at 1145 Main Street:

Motion #15/16-390: Matthew O'Brien moved that pursuant to section 9-3 of the Coventry Town Charter that the Town Council call a special Town meeting to consider approving the purchase of real estate located at 1145 Main Street, Coventry to be used for Town purposes. He further moved that the Town Clerk and Town Manager be directed to advertise said Town Meeting for Monday, June 20, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the Town Hall Annex located to the rear of 1712 Main Street. Thomas Pope seconded the motion.

Lisa Thomas noted two addresses, 1145 and 1153 are included in the attached documents. John replied they are next door to each other. Lisa asked if tax forgiveness is being given on both. John replied yes. Hannah asked if we have plans for the property. John replied it is a parking lot now and we plan to leave it as a parking lot. We want to make clear it is not open space. Thomas Pope said based on multiple questions he has received after seeing this on the agenda, why did we ever lease the property to begin with? John replied we got a grant to build a parking lot - it was state money - and conditions were we had to have a lease. Julie asked if that commitment is met. John said it was a ten-year lease with two five-year renewals. We are in the first of the two 5-year renewals. After seven years the public could no longer park there. **Motion #15/16-390 carried on unanimous vote.**

C. 15/16-100: Consideration/Authorization of Town Manager to Sign MOU with the Board Of Education for Operation of Preschool Fund:

The Council reviewed the draft MOU included with the agenda materials. John Elsesser said it is based on discussions that the Board of Education has had and is consistent with the fund that the Council set up. Thomas Pope asked what change this MOU makes. John replied it still operates in the fund but transfers some of the administration. Currently CECC parents writes checks to them and the Board of Education writes checks back to CECC. The Board wants clarification that if they take over the administrative function that it still aligns with the fund. Thomas asked if we don't recommend this be signed, what would change. Matthew O'Brien asked if it would be possible to get the original document. John said yes. Matthew said he knows that we are paying special education expenditures. Does the section regarding grants and transfers as part of the general fund include special education? John said they should clarify. We can put it on the next agenda - maybe on the Finance Committee agenda we can provide the fund creation guidelines so we can have a head start. **Motion #15/16-391: Lisa Thomas moved to continue item 8C to the next Council meeting. The motion was seconded by Richard Williams and carried on unanimous vote.**

D. 15/16-101: Consideration/Authorization to Accept Gift of Golf Cart Valued at \$3,000 for Coventry Farmers' Market at Hale Homestead from Highland Park Market:

Motion #15/16-392: Thomas Pope moved to accept a gift of a golf cart valued at \$3,000

for Coventry Farmers' Market at Hale Homestead from Highland Park Market. The motion was seconded by Matthew O'Brien. Julie noted the background memo states that Highland Park Market wants to be more involved in the Market. John said yes. Some would view that as competition but they have brought Market products to their shelves. Thomas said he would like to speak in support of the motion. Highland Park Market goes above and beyond to support our community. **Motion #15/16-392 carried on unanimous vote.**

9. Miscellaneous Correspondence:

B. Citizen Correspondence: Request For Consideration, ATV and/or Noise Ordinance:

Lisa Thomas noted this person is requesting specific involvement from the Council. She knows that noise ordinance issues have come up before and we have done already almost all we can. What would our next step be? Julie said she thought we have a noise ordinance. John replied no, it is very difficult to monitor and enforce - we have to have training and equipment. CT DEEP used to do it but stopped. CT DEEP monitors ATV use. We could tell him to call CT DEEP but they are at about half staff with the budget cutbacks. We could look at policy matters in Steering short of ordinance development. Thomas said perhaps the Town Manager could send a letter to the person explaining the situation. John noted it is a respect issue. The problem with a noise ordinance is you have to have an ambient reading first so you can take metering at higher levels. There are other actions that can be taken by the person such as a private nuisance lawsuit. The Town Manager's office will follow up and report back to the Council Steering Committee.

C. Board of Education minutes and agenda:

Matthew O'Brien said this item ties into the conversation we were having about the preschool. On their agenda under old business it says "discussion and possible vote on CECC board request." If you read the minutes it could mean taking over administration. He would like to know more because it may impact our budget. Julie will write to them. Matthew said it seems to tie in with their request for the memorandum so he would like to get information before we vote on the memorandum.

10. Executive Session:

Motion #15/16-393: Matthew O'Brien moved that the Town Council enter into Executive Session pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(B)-discussion of strategy and negotiation with respect to pending claims and litigation to which the public agency or a member thereof, because of his conduct as a member of such agency is a party until such litigation claim has been finally adjudicated or otherwise settled with the following people in attendance: Town Council members, the Town Manager and the Town Finance Director. The motion was seconded by Thomas Pope and carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #15/16-394: Matthew O'Brien moved that the Town Council enter into Executive Session pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(D)-discussion of the selection of a site or the lease, sale or purchase of real estate by a political subdivision of the state when publicity regarding such a site, lease, sale, purchase or construction would cause a likelihood of an increased price until such time as all of the property has been acquired or all proceedings or transactions concerning same have been terminated or abandoned with the following people in attendance: Town Council members, the Town Manager and the Town Finance Director. The motion was seconded by Thomas Pope and carried on unanimous vote.

Executive Session commenced at 9:07 PM.

Motion #15/16-395: Thomas Pope moved to leave Executive Session at 9:35 PM, seconded by Matthew O'Brien and unanimously approved.

11. Adjournment:

Motion #15/16-396: Thomas Pope moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:36 PM, seconded by Matthew O'Brien and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone
Town Council Clerk

Note: These minutes are not official until acted on by the Town Council at its next regular meeting. Those meeting minutes will reflect approval or changes to these minutes.