

**Minutes
Coventry Town Council Meeting
August 1, 2016
Town Hall Annex**

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
Present: Julie Blanchard, Hannah Pietrantonio, Lisa Thomas, Andy Brodersen, Thomas Pope, Richard Williams, 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, July 18, 2016:**
Motion #16/17-10: Thomas Pope moved and Matthew O'Brien seconded to accept the minutes from the Town Council meeting of July 18, 2016. The following corrections were requested:
 1. **Page 3, Item C, 2nd line: add the word "June" so the second sentence reads, He didn't have a chance to review Board of Education reports prior to the June Finance Committee meeting..."****The motion to accept the minutes as corrected carried with Lisa Thomas abstaining and all other members in favor.** Julie Blanchard noted that Jennifer Beausoleil had spoken during of Audience of Citizens at the meeting urging the Town Council to consider doing a safety survey relative to a proposed gas infusion station on Rt. 6 in Andover. That project has since been withdrawn.
5. **Consent Agenda:**
Motion #16/17-11: Thomas Pope moved and Matthew O'Brien seconded to accept the Consent Agenda. Lisa Thomas requested to remove item 9A. The motion to accept the Consent Agenda with the removal of item 9A carried on unanimous vote.
6. **Reports:**
 - A. Council Chairwoman – Julie Blanchard:** We lost a valuable member of our community this month - Robert Plant. Robert was an active community member and will be missed. He was the videographer for CoventryVision and filmed many meetings and he also volunteered for Charter Community Access. He was a volunteer for the North Coventry Volunteer Fire Department and joined in 1985. He was also a Red Cross instructor, an EMT, a Fire Fighter III, a Fire Fighter instructor and officer, and the recording secretary for the NCVFD Board of Directors. Lisa Thomas said he was a mentor to her daughter in journalism and a great neighbor.
 - B. Council Members:**
Lisa Thomas said that last Wednesday she went for a ride along with Officer Gail McDonnell. She wants to thank Officer McDonnell for taking the time to explain to her the fingerprinting techniques and the new machine the department uses. In addition, while we were in the car patrolling, Officer McDonnell explained her approaches to community safety and how she maintains a presence in both the residential and commercial areas of town. We also discussed what she thinks about in terms of her own safety. What sticks with Lisa the most was when we drove by a homeless man quietly

rolling up his possessions. Officer McDonnell told her that it was only recently that she took it upon herself to get out of her vehicle and approach the gentleman. She asked about his story, his safety and his needs. She and Lisa talked about how taking the time to do this probably improved the man's safety and well-being, as well the safety and well-being of our community, too. These small ways that we reach out, that our police reach out, to those in need or distress will continue to build the bridges to community policing that we need. This moral standard is one that Lisa believes is shared by all of our officers. Lisa offered her thanks to Officer Gail and to the entire department, and congratulations to Officer Gail on her retirement, saying she will be missed.

Last Friday, Lisa and her husband were honored to attend the Coventry Volunteer Fire Department's annual awards banquet. It was an excellent opportunity to chat with some of our emergency responders. So many are part of families with multiple members who give of their time and resources. She spoke extensively with a couple of members about acquisition of the refurbished tower truck/Quint and the new tanker truck. One thing that stood out for her was the level of planning and cooperation between the departments as they work towards these two important pieces of equipment. They resoundingly agreed that it has been a positive experience.

Lisa attended the information session about the hydrilla eradication plan. It was a very productive meeting and she feels that the CT DEEP representatives worked very hard to answer residents' questions and to be flexible in how they might work with our community. New ideas were brought up by attendees and quickly woven into the planning process. She hopes that the Council has sent out a thank you to the CT DEEP folks who were at the meeting to present information and answer questions. It is not typical that so many department heads and bureau chiefs come out for such a meeting. She thinks it really shows the urgency of this issue and the State's desire to help.

Hannah Pietrantonio said that the hydrilla treatment presentation was well attended by lots of concerned folks. The delivery of information was amazing and CT DEEP's commitment was well received by the Town. She was amazed to know this is the only public lake in the state with hydrilla. CT DEEP understands the urgency in addressing it.

C. COVRRRA – John Elsesser:

We are expecting in two Council meetings to have the plan for alternatives to the location of the transfer station. Posts for the new rail system have been installed and we should be in compliance with OSHA regulations by the end of the week.

D. Town Manager – John Elsesser:

1. Projects:

- Connecticut Natural Gas has established a meeting on 8/23 in the Annex to meet with residents interested in converting to natural gas. Letters are being sent.
- We received a handicapped Dial-a-ride van from Windham Regional Transit District. They are removing the coin mechanism and we will evaluate to see if we want to add it to our fleet for the Human Services Department's use. The lift was removed in the van we have. We use it in conjunction with the school system to bring students to help with the Food Bank. We need an accessible vehicle. The acquisition cost is zero.
- The irrigation system at Laidlaw Park is up and running and we await one more quote on fencing. Matthew O'Brien asked if there have been any trespassing

issues. John replied we haven't had problems but we have had the gate locked. The park neighbors have tolerated this but we want to get it back open.

- Our chip seal road work date got moved up because someone else wasn't ready. We are beginning on Wednesday in Waterfront Heights.
- We are having problems this summer with lifeguard staffing - many students are going back to school early and we will have a problem with weekend coverage. We will have weekday coverage through Labor Day. Thomas Pope asked when we hire them whether we hire them for the season. John replied we hire them for the season and then some tell us later in the season that they are leaving. We are talking with other towns about having a more aggressive training and recruitment process that guarantees a summer job for 4 years. We are meeting Thursday to map out the best coverage we can. Thomas said maybe we could consider giving lifeguards an incentive to stay – such as a bonus. John replied that some towns are doing that – we feel it is too late this year but we will look at it for next year.
- A new event has just come up – Congressman Courtney is working with emergency services to do a car heat safety workshop this Friday at 2:30, at a location to be determined. The Children's Hospital is also involved and Rep. Ackert is being invited.
- The sidewalk bid for the section where it ends by the Middle School up to Ripley Hill is going to bid Thursday.
- The Lake/Cross Street LOTCIP project will be out to bid by the beginning of next week.
- The lake gate bid will be out to bid this week with the hope of an October first construction start.
- The second round of fanwort treatment was done on Eagleville Lake. It was non-eventful and a follow up will take place in two weeks.
- Our kick-off Solarize Coventry workshop was last week. Approximately 40 people attended. Other workshops are scheduled.

Thomas Pope asked that the written projects update memo contain page numbers in the future. He asked about an item on the report under "other construction projects" regarding the gazebo landscaping and whether these are new bridges. John replied the white one was already there and the other one is new. Thomas asked why the gazebo was put on wood rather than block. John replied it is pressure treated wood. We bought it from Kloter Farms and it will be there a long time. It may be rotated – we are still evaluating where the entrance should be. Thomas said it would be a nice spot for small outdoor concert. John said yes and we will be working with the Arts Guild and Song-a-Day to develop events. It would be nice for string quartets or a solo artist. The band shell (at Patriots Park) is nice but it is large.

2. Transfer of Rt. 6 land: John Elsesser said we wanted to share all the little pieces we have and mention we got 277 acres of land at no cost to us to acquire through this transfer. Thomas Pope disagreed that it was at no cost – this was Town land that the State took and it had a value of over \$3.5 million and an assessed value of \$2.2 million. It would have generated \$77,000 of revenue per year, which would have amounted to the cost of the new library. He thinks we paid dearly for it. He noted we can't use it for ballfields but we can walk on it. John replied that others would argue that open space is less costly than land in

development. Julie Blanchard asked about the planned October excursion for land use groups and who would be involved. John replied Conservation and the group that is working on maintenance. Inland Wetlands may also have an interest. We may need to use ATV vehicles or do sections of the parcel over several weekends. There are no trails and it extends from Willimantic to Bolton. Julie said she would like a report from Eric Trott or some group that quantifies our amount of open space. John said we will request it, and that this parcel amounts to about a 1% increase.

3. Update: crumbling concrete foundations: John Elsesser referenced two letters contained in the agenda packet, one from the Attorney General saying he doesn't believe there are grounds for a consumer protection litigation case - we don't necessarily disagree as we have not found intent. The pot of money they could get would be insignificant after many years of litigation. The Governor's reply in response to our 4-town letter indicates he did not choose to form a task force or address the needs of some of the individuals in terms of forming a long-term plan. We appreciate the science the State is doing but people need help now. A lot of towns affected met at the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and later this month we expect their Board of Directors will adopt a resolution to create an ad-hoc working group on our own because we believe if every town addresses this on their own it won't be consistent. We would like to develop and use the same forms, i.e. engineer evaluation, reductions in assessed values, forgiving building permit fees, etc. We need to know what towns are doing to be on same page. We are meeting in a couple weeks to begin working on some of those issues. We will be reaching out to senators and representatives because we believe that State money will be needed to help resolve some of these issues and to put pressure on the federal government to step up and fund it. The information we received from Canada was helpful and might be a basis for some of the solutions we are looking for as we begin to calculate values and methodology. Canada is about 4 years ahead of us with this issue. Thomas Pope said it is important for people to realize the problem will affect them even if they don't have the problem – the grand list will go down so everyone else's taxes will have to go up to offset the reduction. It will also affect the real estate market in the region. Some agents are already reluctant to sell homes built during that construction period. When we consider what has to be done we will need the support of the entire community to get things done. Your neighbor's house may be crumbling but it will affect you indirectly. John said CRCOG is very good at putting bids together so they may have bid templates for contractors that people can use. It costs \$4,000-\$5,000 for the evaluation to determine whether you have it or not – this will affect people when they want to sell their homes or change insurance companies. The State is still working on insurance companies to try and get them to step up. They are also putting a lot of pressure on banks – who should have a deeply vested interest in solving this issue. There is a provision that your mortgage can be called if your value goes down dramatically. Borrowing against a line of credit could also be affected. It really looks like towns are going to have to collectively do this on our own.

4. Hydrilla treatment in Coventry Lake: John Elsesser said we had a conference call today and the treatment dates were chosen: August 10th in the afternoon and August 11th in the morning. Double dosing within 12 hours has been shown to be more effective. We are waiting for some official language

regarding the treatment and then will send notification letters out – that will be ready in a day or two. It will be publicized via social media and an ad will go in the paper. There will be signage at the boat launches. Thomas Pope asked whether they are going to restrict boat traffic. John said in the cove area only, which is a 9-acre area. The boat launch will be open. Even though the treatment product label says you can swim and fish immediately the State would prefer to limit activities for a couple days. They are trying to get permission to put up signs on the island and the cove corner. They still await permission from Marine Enforcement. Thomas asked if it would behoove us to invest time and money and have our own marine patrol officer out there that day. John said he will check. Tom said he feels it would be a wise move. Thomas said if he can't maybe we could get someone from the waterski club. John said we have hired Dr. Kortmann to do a pre- and post- treatment water quality analysis. Plus there will probably be another survey of the whole lake. Matthew O'Brien asked what to do if you find it on shore. John replied the simplest and best method is to put it in a plastic bag and throw it out so it will be burned in the landfill. If it gets back into the lake it can continue to spread for years. Matthew suggested doing an email blast right away and then again at treatment time. John said we just need the language and then we will publicize. Matthew said we just don't want to wait until right before it is done. He said he learned a lot at the meeting. It was very informative and well done and he thought citizens were more comfortable that something is being done. It was mentioned at the meeting that it will probably require a multi-year approach for up to 7 years. The State raised funds for the treatment which is great given the economic climate. Hannah Pietrantonio said the letter from the Bolton Friends of the Lake group was interesting and it is clear they understand the importance of lake management issues.

7. Unfinished Business:

A. 15/16-113: Discussion/possible action: Request for financial information from the Coventry Board of Education: To be discussed at a future Finance Committee meeting with recommendations to follow. No further action taken.

8. New Business:

A. 16/17-4: Consideration/Possible Action: Resolution authorizing Town Manager to execute contract agreement with CT DEEP for Mill Brook Greenway Extension and Recreational Trails grant: John Elsesser showed a map illustrating the Mill Brook Greenway Extension project, indicating this is often called the Decew property. The Town acquired the property due to failure to pay taxes. We tore down the home – there was not sufficient space for septic. This area was one of the really old factory areas in town. It includes the Depot Road dam. It will be a little park – there will not be a lot of changes. We will install a safety barrier to keep people off the dam. There will be a viewing area and a paved parking area. Invasive species removal will be done. River access for kayaks, etc. will be provided via a walkway. The long term goal is to connect the entire mill stream walkway, which runs from Mason Street at one end to this property at the other. We have some long-term concept plans for the center area but the neighbors are not interested. When the Town Public Works facility was sold the funds were dedicated to this. A lot of it will be focused on the history of the mill. There will be photos that people can see.

Motion #16/17-12: Matthew O'Brien moved the following resolution: Be it resolved that it is in the best interests of the Town of Coventry to enter into contracts with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. In furtherance of this resolution,

John A. Elsesser, the Town Manager, is duly authorized to enter into and sign said contracts on behalf of the Town of Coventry. John A. Elsesser currently holds the title of Town Manager and has held that office since May 5, 1988. The Town Manager is further authorized to provide such additional information and execute such other documents as may be required by the state or federal government in connection with said contracts and to execute any amendments, rescissions, and revisions thereto. Lisa Thomas seconded the motion, which carried on unanimous vote.

Matthew O'Brien asked about timing for the project. John replied that we will get them the resolution and then they will get us a contract. A follow-up to historical survey is also required. We are hoping a lot will happen this fall. We anticipate contracting out this fall with some spring clean-up of signage.

B. 16/17-5: Consideration/Possible Action: Resolution authorizing Town Manager to execute lease purchase financing agreement for the purchase of a 4x4 Backhoe and Two Pieces of Fire Apparatus, a Water Tanker and a Quint; total not to exceed \$773,000: John Elsesser said on an annual basis we have to identify lease purchases before we go too far into acquisition. We have made a reservation and have the Quint in line. We are finalizing the top two choices for the water tanker truck. Matthew noted the total seems like a high number - didn't the Quint price go down? Beth Bauer replied we don't know what the new number is. These were the numbers that were in the budget. The purpose of the resolution is to preserve our tax exempt status for leasing. When we do our financing they will look at this and we have to have a number that is higher than what we are actually borrowing. So we recommend we don't adjust the number unless we know for certain. John said it might be easier if we track the budget process. We will promise on the record we will not use this as a license to spend. The backhoe is frozen until September. We are getting a little nervous about availability for this model year. If we go to another model year the price will go up. Matthew asked what John recommends. John said we recommend going with this number and we will report back - we had \$300,000 in for the tanker truck and those are looking like \$324,000. At this point the backhoe is a fixed price. We have told the Fire Department that the savings for the Quint doesn't mean we can spend more elsewhere. Tom said why gamble on the price for the backhoe, when we know we are going to get it. Matthew said if we have a good buy for the Town we should do it. We still don't know about the \$22 million potential additional budget reduction from the State.

Motion #16/17-13: Matthew O'Brien moved the following resolution:

WHEREAS, THE Town of Coventry wishes to purchase a 4 x 4 Backhoe, and two pieces of fire apparatus, a Water Tanker and a Quint; total of all three not to exceed \$773,000; and

WHEREAS, the Town plans to purchase these items initially with funds currently within the Town's non-recurring capital expenditure fund; and

WHEREAS, in order to replenish said non-recurring capital expenditure fund the Town intends to enter into a lease purchase financing agreement with a recognized lending company at a date in the near future; and

WHEREAS, a lease purchase financing agreement will allow the Town to immediately obtain and utilize this vehicle for the benefit of Town residents, allow the Town to pay for said vehicle over time and further allow the Town to reimburse its non-recurring

capital fund for other possible uses for the benefit of the Town; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has determined that a lease purchase financing agreement of this nature is in the best interests of the Town of Coventry.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

Town Manager, John A. Elsesser, is hereby authorized to negotiate and execute all documents necessary for the purchase of said vehicle from funds contained within the non-recurring capital fund; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

Town Manager, John A. Elsesser, is hereby authorized to negotiate and execute a lease purchase financing agreement with a recognized and responsible lending company under such terms as he views favorable to the Town in order to effectuate the intent of this resolution and which meets the requirements of United States Treasury Regulation Section 1.150-2; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

Upon the execution of said lease purchasing financing agreement and the receipt of funds from such financing agreement, the Town Manager or Finance Director shall use such funds to reimburse the non-recurring capital fund for the expenditure of the above referenced vehicle.

Andy Brodersen seconded the motion, which carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #16/17-14: Matthew O'Brien moved to authorize the Town Manager to move forward with the purchase of the backhoe and remove it from the list of temporary freeze items in the capital budget. The motion was seconded by Thomas Pope and carried on unanimous vote.

John Elsesser said after the bids are opened and evaluated for the natural gas boilers we will probably come back with a similar motion. We have to do an evaluation of the conversion and alternates and we really didn't know the price at all. Our current recommendation would be to pay with cash.

9. Miscellaneous/Correspondence:

A. Community Support for Booth & Dimock Library Expansion Project: Lisa Thomas said she removed this item from the Consent Agenda because there are several letters and a document with signatures in favor of the Library expansion project and she wanted to acknowledge there is a great deal of community support. The document with the signatures is not in a format that could be accepted as a petition but she was told by library staff it had not been intended to be submitted as such. She was dismayed to read the minutes of the July 15th Town Council meeting. The project was approved by the previous Council and she understands that the Republican majority has no obligation to honor that commitment. However, the current Republican majority has not once since last November indicated that the Library Expansion Committee should not continue to hold public information sessions about this project and continue to revise the scope of work. In actuality, the current majority has sent the committee back to the drawing table time and time again – only to then publicly berate these volunteers for not saying what the majority has wanted to hear, which seems to be “you know what, let’s not move forward with this project.” She read each majority member’s carefully crafted comments from the last Council meeting, all of which indicated

support for the project, but ended with saying this is not the time to let the voters decide whether or not to move forward and we should wait a year. Not let the voters decide? Isn't that the role of the voters? She doesn't think the Council should assume voters can't make decisions in their own best interest. We have an informed community. The Council had plenty of input – requesting revisions to parking spaces, site design, costs furnishings, even getting the Library Board of Trustees to turn over the building to town ownership once it is built. It has been a confusing message to the expansion committee because meetings continued to happen and many questions were asked by the Council over the past few months. The committee addressed all of those questions and had anticipated the project would be put forth to referendum. She thinks the press was surprised too because we got a “Needles” editorial in the *Chronicle*. She is concerned the committee didn't have an opportunity to be treated more kindly. In addition to countless time spent by library volunteers, there was a great deal of time spent by town staff and she would like to request the Town Manager provide a recap of town resources that went into in developing the expansion proposal, both dollars and staff time, and also if it will have to be recreated or duplicated by postponing the project a year. She expressed her thanks to the committee – she knows there was a lot of disappointment that it didn't go forward.

Richard Williams asked if we need consensus to ask the Town Manager to provide the information Lisa requested. Julie Blanchard replied she thinks a Council member can ask for information.

Executive Session:

Motion #16/17-15: Thomas Pope moved that the Town Council enter into Executive Session pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(A): discussion concerning the employment, appointment, performance, evaluation, health or dismissal of a public officer or employee with the following in attendance: Town Council members, the Town Manager and the Finance Director. The motion was seconded by Matthew O'Brien and carried on unanimous vote.

Executive Session commenced at 8:31 PM.

Motion #16/17-16: Richard Williams moved to leave Executive Session at 8:51 PM. The motion was seconded by Matthew O'Brien and carried on unanimous vote.

The Town Council agreed by consensus to award John Elsesser, Town Manager, a 2% raise and a one-time \$500 merit bonus effective July 1, 2016.

11. Adjournment:

Motion #16/17-17: Matthew O'Brien moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 PM. The motion was seconded by Thomas Pope and carried on unanimous vote.

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.