

Minutes
Local Emergency Coordinating Committee Meeting
January 5, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM.

Present: John Elsesser, Laura Stone, Bud Meyers, Eric Peterson, Lisa Thomas, Jonathan Hand, Bill Watkins, Ted Opdenbrouw, Jim McLoughlin

Audience of Citizens: none

Acceptance of Minutes:

Bud Meyers moved to accept the minutes of the December 1, 2022 meeting, seconded by Jonathan Hand. The motion carried on unanimous vote.

COVID 19 Update – John Elsesser:

The numbers are jumping - today's stats are over 17%. We will talk about expiring test kits and methods of distribution. There are no other real issues beyond living with it. A lot of staff members were out but they are coming back.

Events:

Bud Meyers reported that the Fire Department Fill the Boot Drive collected over \$2,000 due to DJ's efforts. Reach across America and Christmas in the Village were well attended. Thanks to Ray Oliver for spearheading traffic assistance. Unfortunately Ray is moving to Florida. DJ also headed up Christmas deliveries to households. There was an amazing response to the toy drive. We took in \$270 in donations on top of the toys.

Agency updates:

Police Department – Eric Peterson:

- Calls for service were a little busier over holidays.
- Only one employee got COVID.
- We have a new officer starting 2/1. He will be working nights and knows what he is getting into. He is transferring from Manchester and will only need 3-4 months of training. This brings us to full staffing, but we are getting a spring retirement. We may do an entry-level recruitment and get someone certified. This is difficult. We will reach out to UConn, Eastern, social media, churches etc. if you know of anyone looking for a career in law enforcement let me know.
- Lisa Thomas expressed thanks to the CPD for helping with traffic at Christmas in the Village. Eric replied that it was a fun event.

Fire Department – Bud Meyers:

- For the month of December we responded to 162 calls consisting of: 64 BLS, 50 ALS, 3 Cardiac arrests for a total of 117 Medical calls, 1 Structure fire and 3 Mutual aid structure fires, 1 Vehicle fire, 2 Brush fires, 4 MVA's, 4 False alarms, 16 Tree & wires, 8 Good intent and 1 Dive team rescue.

- We ended the year 2022 with 1502 calls that was 162 more calls than last year. Consisting of 1104 Medical, 45 MVA, 29 Fire, 61 Tree and wires, 21 Hazmat, and 242 service calls. There were also 180 more EMS calls than the previous year.
- The department was very active with community service in December. Fill-a-Boot for PJ Day, Toy Drive, Wreaths across America, Christmas in the Village, a highly requested Holiday Light Parade, Escorting Santa deliveries, along with mandatory equipment and vehicle checks. This equated to 336 personnel hours. We also had an additional 140 personnel hours of training.
- Special thank you to Chief Figiela for spearheading the fill-a-boot and escorting Santa, along with Ray Oliver for his leadership in making Wreaths across America, Christmas in the Village successful.
- Storm cleanup didn't take long this time around.
- Zach Laskey has successfully completed his Firefighter 2 program and Chief Boutin has successfully completed Fire Service Instructor 2. This allows him to oversee a live fire scene. We are looking for a replacement due to Corey's departure.
- Preventive maintenance is completed on all the large apparatus.
- Engine 318 still needs pressure relief valve work. We are watching it closely; it is not out of service.
- On 12/31, members responding to a second call for difficulty breathing arrived on scene and witnessed the person go into cardiac arrest. I am pleased to say that their quick actions were exemplary and the person is doing well and is back home. We will be looking to issue lifesaving awards at an upcoming Town Council meeting.

Public Works – Bill Watkins:

- This week and last the crew has been busy with storm cleanup – we are about wrapped up.
- We got concrete products cleaned up and moved offsite from the pit at South Ext & Plains Rd. Earth Dynamics took it at their field in Mansfield. We are working on a relationship with them for hauling of construction material and use of useful material. John said this means the end of a job will take a little longer, but we won't have to double-handle materials. Bill said we spent the day today with every truck we have to haul the product out. We will have to reconfigure what we do a bit, but at the end of the day it will be a win.
- We are in the final stages of planning a tree project with Distinctive Tree for removal of 100 trees on Wrights Mill and Nathan Hale Rd. They are primarily dead ash and other hazardous trees.
- Bill has been working on a horizontal curve sign project for CT DOT. Hopefully we will get some signage. There are 30-40 different locations.
- Two buildings at Creaser Park are scheduled for demolition with Earth Dynamics (the low bidder) – permits have been submitted. Bud said he met with Jimmy Galey, and the Fire Department will utilize these buildings for training prior to demolition. Jim McLoughlin noted that Lesley will be going through the buildings first to coordinate removal of wanted items.
- Bill attended a regional emergency support meeting today.
- We had one employee test positive for COVID yesterday. Kits have been distributed.

Coventry Public Schools – Ted Opendbrouw:

- The School Violence Prevention COPS grant we applied for in 2022 was awarded this month. It is a Federal grant. Only one town in Connecticut got funds and it was Bridgeport. We will continue to look for grants for security and safety items.
- We put together a training program for teaching staff on outdoor emergency procedures. There are always a lot of questions from teachers about what to do if they are outside with the kids and there is a lockdown or other incident.
- New signs regarding trespassing and loitering were created for all schools and installed two weeks ago. We had problems with people using school property to walk their dogs or use the track while school was in session. A lot of people didn't know this is prohibited by law. Lisa Thomas thanked Ted for taking care of that.

Emergency Management – Jim McLoughlin:

- We developed a flyer announcing the live link for Storm reporting. It is being sent out via e-blast and social media accounts.
- An after-action review of the recent storm is set for 1/12.
- The old ambulance 618 sold for \$10,000.
- Jim and Bud attended a meeting to help with recruitment efforts.
- Vintech has notified us of a minimum of 20% increase for renewal of their contract when it is up in 2024. The contract has a 60-day cancellation notice clause.
- Ray Eldridge has coordinated a meeting with CRCOG to discuss the re-establishment of a Coventry CERT team.
- November data: we had 6.2 calls per day compared to the normal average of 3. Numbers for 2022 were up significantly.
- A great job was done by all at the structure fire on Brigham Rd. Dunkin' Donuts provided discounted snacks and drinks for the firefighters – a thank you letter has been sent.
- An article on the EMS procurement crisis was shared with committee members. We are on an eight-year schedule to replace ambulances. The next replacement on our schedule is 2026 – we were told by vendors if we want it then we should order it now.
- The new ET is in Rocky Hill as of yesterday – it is getting a post-delivery inspection. The deck will be installed while they have it. Once we receive it, it will be equipped and training will commence immediately.
- We sent a letter to the property owner on Cooper Lane about reparations for damage done during the structure fire.
- We are meeting with the Board of Education to discuss a credit-based curriculum for high school students interested in a firefighting career. Students would receive credit toward a trade career or volunteer activity. If Coventry Public Schools is interested, it will expand the pool of towns who have already implemented it and we will invite them in to share their successes.
- We have discussed a few concerns with Eric Trott regarding addresses for new properties.
- Awards were presented to Mike Cote, Jared Dewey, Ray Oliver, Bobby Breault and Ryan Miller at the December Town Council meeting. Replacements are being sought for Ray Oliver and Corey LaChance. The same seven people continue to be the most active.
- Jim is working on the Operating budget and is working with the Finance Office, Town Manager and Town Council to present the things we are looking at.

Town Manager – John Elsesser:

- Follow up to the recent storm: We had reached out to the Town Manager in Mansfield about whether our citizens could go there for a warming center. They had agreed. This gets back to looking at a regional shelter. For us to create a warming shelter is another staffing requirement, while the Mansfield facility is not that far away and is staffed. We should continue to look at it as a warming center especially on nights and weekends where we don't have staff.
- We have been a Heart Safe community in the past – John is not sure where we are on that. Jim McLoughlin replied that we got that designation renewed. Alex took it on. John says he thinks some signs might have been taken down.
- We are going to be doing an education campaign about Coventry's building code BCES rating – homeowners should qualify for a good discount and competitive insurance rates. Very few communities have a local rating – kudos to Joe Callahan for doing the foundation work on that. Not all insurance companies offer the discount. Bud said that ISO is the same. Not all insurance companies do it but the majority will – it shows that people should shop around.
- We just got information about a suicide prevention training program. Recreation has signed up, Human Services already has it. We will send to Jimmy to see if there is any interest. Bud said we have been working on a peer support program.
- We ordered a new generator for the South Street firehouse. It is back-ordered for 40 weeks. We may offer the old one to the grammar school where a conduit was recently installed for the refrigerator. It is part of our CIP to have generators at the schools. Bud said it would be limited but if it could keep the Internet working that would be good. John said we will have to do a load calculation – but the generator does have some life left. It might be worth the money to install a transfer switch.
- Regarding regional shelter issues – we had a draft contract going around a few years ago. Our CERT team would play a role.
- CRCOG legislative priorities – we been able to get COST, CRCOG and CCM to add the EMS issue to their legislative agendas. Both reimbursement and recruitment – each with a slightly different focus. The Legislature is going back to live hearings. Municipal leaders usually get the first hour of testimony.
- Tolland County is still working on some radio communication initiatives to reuse some of our stuff. Jimmy is going through the consultation study. CRCOG awarded 3 grants, one for regional canine; we couldn't make it happen by the deadline because it required union review. A couple of other RPIP grants were funded – including for a building official. They added a new requirement that affected unions will have to sign off on before we can participate.

New Business:

Lisa Thomas read the following statement:

“It was brought to my attention that there have been conversations within the community claiming that I support a deep reduction to the fire/EMS department budget. This resulted in a citizen going to Town Hall to voice their opposition and concern that “Lisa Thomas” wants to underfund the department. I would like to make it very clear that no member of the Town Council nor myself wants to do that. For those who have not been following the actions of this Council, I encourage you to revisit minutes and videos to see the numerous steps taken by the

Council to ensure that our fire/EMS/ and police departments are fully staffed and equipped and recognized for their service.

What folks may have heard are concerns over the ongoing economic challenges that our town and citizens face, with more to come as electricity and heating fuel costs continue to rise and put pressure on all of our budgets. I have spoken with our Town Manager about the impact of both a 0 mil rate increase and a status quo budget. This does not mean the Council is looking to underfund any of our departments or that either of those budget scenarios is tenable. But the Council has a duty to be fiscally responsible and to be mindful of those we serve.

To be honest, I was saddened to hear that disinformation is circulating that suggests I don't support our fire/EMS and public safety. If anyone has questions or concerns about where I stand or about comments attributed to me, please ask me directly. I am always available by phone and email, as well as during my monthly office hours at the library and at the Senior Center.

I hope that you will take this information back to staff and volunteers as reassurance.

*Lisa Thomas
Chairwoman, Coventry Town Council
Coventry, CT*

Volunteer Recognition:

Annual thank-you letters and gift items from the Town Council were distributed. Lisa Thomas thanked members of the committee for their service.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjournment at 5:44 PM on a motion by Bud Meyers, seconded by Bill Watkins and unanimously approved

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone