

Minutes
Local Emergency Coordinating Committee Meeting
February 2, 2023
5 PM
Town Hall Conf. B

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM.

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

Acceptance of Minutes, January 2023:

Jonathan Hand moved and Bud Meyers seconded to accept the minutes of January 5, 2023. One correction was requested:

- Page 3 under Emergency Management, 10th bullet, add “gun” after the word “deck,” to read “the deck gun will be installed...”

The motion to accept the minutes as corrected carried on unanimous vote.

Severe Cold Weather Preparation/Communication:

The committee discussed the upcoming severe cold weather event and whether significant plans are needed. The Governor’s office has put out a statement informing the community about various resources.

John Elsesser noted that the extreme cold is forecast for a short period of time, so even if we lose power most houses won’t get frozen pipes. Wind gusts are predicted to be up to 25 mph. We could spend some time tomorrow reminding people what to do and not do.

Jim McLoughlin said he went to State website looking for cold weather protocol and there was nothing there. He found 5 tips to stay warm this winter and pushed that out on social media. We also have items on our own website under the emergency preparedness section. We have already put out some protocols on social media, as has the Town Manager’s office. A shelter or warming center would require personnel, and with the short duration he doesn’t think it is necessary. We have advertised the availability of shelters in the past but have not gotten a lot of response.

Lisa Thomas said she thinks the public is very aware of this pending weather event. John replied that if we need to step in, we will do so.

2023 Meeting Schedule:

A proposed meeting schedule for 2023 was reviewed and adopted. The committee will meet on the first Thursday of the month at 5 PM, except for the month of July.

Agency Updates:

Police Department – Eric Peterson:

- We are promoting Officer Dexter to Sergeant. We want to maximize the time we have a supervisor working, so we plan to look at the corporal level. Eric wants to set the department up with supervisory staff for the long term.
- We lost an officer after 7 months of employment, who left to take a position at CT DEEP.
- Officer Cory Wesoloskie started today. He will fit in well.
- Everything else is going well.

Fire/Emergency Management – Jim McLoughlin:

- We had 2 new applicants in the past week.
- A multi-jurisdictional shelter agreement discussion w/Ashford, Willington & Mansfield is taking place on 2/8. We will look at whether to have a shelter and who would do what. Mansfield has been identified as a regional shelter through region 4. It would be staffed by Red Cross.
- Social media member profiles have begun (Meyers, McLoughlin, and Figiela) per the Town Council's request. These will continue. Lisa Thomas said she thinks it's great and other departments should do it.
- The AFG grant application is in process with input from Amanda, Bud & myself – we are feeding info to Alex who is doing the online submission. This would help pay for a new ladder truck. The quote came in at \$2 million. The grant pays up to \$1 million. This is the biggest piece of apparatus we have in the fleet. Ours is 23 years old. The application is due a week from Friday, but we probably won't hear back until fall. John said we could look at taking some equipment off and if we could get it to \$1.5 million and get the grant, we might be able to lease purchase it at \$50,000 per year. We have to look at the grant conditions because we can't guarantee we will fund it if the grant is not received. This may require a referendum, details to be determined. Bud said he looked at refurbing the current ladder truck and the pricing was \$900,000. The all-steer components are obsolete. We need that capability to navigate tight areas around the lake. John said we will look at the grant application to see what the conditions are. This just came to his attention today. A lot of towns have changed their philosophy and Quints are first vehicle to respond to a fire scene. They don't hold as much water but can get the response started. Our primary tool in the toolbox has been the engine tanker. Bud noted that the old ET is a supplemental vehicle – not response.
- The CT Water grant was submitted – decision will be made in March.
- We met with the director of curriculum and high school principal to discuss the development of a high school curriculum program for firefighter/EMS training. This could serve as an intro to fire service as a career path, or develop a program that would provide credits toward graduation and certification as EMTs or firefighters, or both. Jim has heard from other towns that are working on it. The Town of Shelton is also looking at going with law enforcement as well. These programs are getting attention by the State for funding. She shared a flyer from the Town of Colchester. Coventry Public Schools has asked for time to evaluate this with peers and gauge student interest. Maybe it could be an after-school program next fall with an in-school program the following year. This may help with recruitment and retention. We would have to be careful of the starting age – youth can't be certified until age 18.

- We did a legislative review for the upcoming session – there are numerous fire-EMS service related bills for consideration. Letters were sent to Sen. Osten and Representatives Rochelle & Ackert asking them to include State Forests and not just State Parks for reimbursement. Legislators responded in favor of including state forests in the language.
- The cannabis policy draft we generated needs legal review. It is under review by the Town Manager. John said he is looking at issues for Town employees as well. The laws are murky. If you have a CDL license you can't use it. There are conflicts with certain federal laws like establishing a drug free workplace. We need to get clarification. We are working on it because people are asking. Lisa asked if we can regulate use during working hours. John said yes, it is clear while an employee is here, but what if they go out to lunch? You can have a drink at lunch, you just can't come to work impaired. This is different. Cannabis stays in your system for 30 days at least. If it pops up in random drug test, was it in their system while at work? These are the types of issues that need to be clarified and addressed.
- Life Saving Awards will be presented at the Town Council meeting on February 6. The new ET will be on display just prior to the meeting at 7 PM.
- 400/800 Cross band parts have been ordered by TN. This allows all departments to talk to each other.
- Bioterrorism medical counter measures planning is underway with the identified locales for the Coventry region to be EO Smith & Mansfield Middle School. These sites were chosen for their medical oversight capabilities. Bud Meyers noted that logistics for transporting a contaminated person are tricky.
- The paramedic contract with Windham Hospital has been renewed.
- Jim raised the need for awareness around the issues of people videotaping at Town Hall, calling it a 1st Amendment audit – are we prepared if someone should press the issue at Town Hall? Are there guidelines for employees? John said we did send around a memo making staff to be aware of the issue, but we should also identify those areas that are not public. Lisa asked if there is a list that people can refer to. John said no. We have talked to staff about putting up some signage. There are conflicts in certain areas. Eric Peterson noted that if something gets confrontational you can always call the PD and we will respond.

Fire Chief – Bud Meyers:

- Calls: for the month of January we responded to 91 calls consisting of: 42 BLS, 26 ALS, and 1 cardiac arrest for a total of 69 Medical calls, 1 mutual aid structure fire, 1 Chimney fire, 1 appliance fire, 6 MVA's, 3 false alarms, and 10 good intent.
- We also had an additional 142 personnel hours of training and events.
- We have taken two probationary members into the department and got three new applications.
- We have at least 16 members willing to assist with traffic duty at the Farmer's Market, so we will continue to support this event.
- The Planning and Development Chairs are evaluating the strategic plan for the future.

Public Works – Bill Watkins:

- We have had 11 snow and ice events, using 529 tons of salt, which is lighter than normal. This freed us up for other tasks.
- Ditch work is pending.

- We are planning for spring construction.
- The crew was down at the Miller Richardson pit this week to clear it in preparation for softball field #2.
- Asplundh is in town doing trimming for Eversource. We await confirmation from Eversource on the pending large tree removal project.
- The furnace at the Babcock Hill house quit working and there was water damage. We are getting repair quotes. The artwork being stored there was delivered back to David Hayes. John said we need to decide what to do with this property long term. We don't have a current purpose for it beyond storage. Bill said we can't just shut the furnace off for cold storage. The building would go downhill quickly, and get moldy, etc.

Coventry Public Schools – Ted Opdenbrouw:

- With the cold weather snap, the high school/middle school will open at 6:20 so the kids don't have to wait outside, and at 7:20 for CGS and GHR. A half day is already on the schedule.
- The police portable radio that was purchased with the multimedia grant is finally ready and we are picking it up tomorrow.
- The State announced two grants yesterday, one for security and one for multimedia. The closing date is 3/31. We are meeting w/Dr. Petrone on Monday to discuss.
- The Reunification committee is making progress. More to report on that next month.
- Bud offered letters of support for the grant applications if needed. Ted said he will discuss it with Bill tomorrow and let them know.

Town Manager – John Elsesser:

- Budget and CIP are his top priorities.
- EMS – we are getting a lot of positive feedback from our testimony. He followed up and there is an earnest effort on a lot of State committees that want to take action – there are 5 committees where it is usually only 1. There is major traction that this is an issue, which is refreshing. We'll see what happens but usually when there is this much movement early in the season it is usually a good sign.
- Economic Development: Woke Breakfast restaurant and a new boxing fitness/therapy gym called Scrub Scraps opened in Coventry Village. Lakeview Restaurant has reopened. We understand they may be looking at someone to take over operations – which could be positive. We have made it clear what the outside music regulations are. An auto repair place where Coventry Collision was is under consideration. The former Pelletier site is under contract. A dog grooming place is operating out of space on Main Street. On Rt. 44, the 7-11 building is vacant. Phil's place is for sale but it is overpriced. The old house next to Virginia's has been purchased for an electrical showroom. The land that is available on Rt. 6 has gotten some interest.
- The grand list didn't grow a lot – 1.8%. Car prices are coming back down which will provide some tax relief.
- We locked in oil at under \$3.
- We are applying for a TRIP grant for pedestrian safety improvements, including crosswalks on Main Street, one on Lake, one at Bidwell Tavern and one at the Library, and one at Robertson School. This is a 100% grant. On South Street we are planning to use a different treatment with surface that lasts longer. There were also two requests for traditional crosswalks – one at

Skungamaug River Golf Club and one at Teleflex. The minimum grant is \$350,000 – we going for about \$400,000. We are also hoping to extend Main Street sidewalks down to Lisicke Beach, and then doing a LOTCIP project for sidewalks on Daly. All those applications have to be in this month. We got 2-week extension on the TRIP grant from 2/10 to 2/28. Mindy is putting together a Rec Trails grant to get access to the Skungamaug River from South Street as an alternative to the issue we've been having since the purchase of the Alers property. It's our land and we need access to it.

Update: Reestablishment of Coventry CERT Team:

Ray Eldridge reported that he and Jim met with CRCOG about reestablishing Coventry's CERT Team. We got approved and can go forward. There is a man in town who wants to be part of the CERT team and has been in touch. Ray has him working on some items that will be coming back for review (flyers, etc.) Will push these out on social media.

Shelter Training available is for CERT teams on April 22. This is an all-day training coordinated by the American Red Cross.

Jim said that a couple of different grant opportunities are available. One is for training and another for clothing. When we do that, because we technically are in Region 4 and we went through CRCOG, any funding we apply for would come from Region 4. There is more funding in Region 4 than Region 3. He talked w/Mike Caplet and they said if we stand up to be successful they might turn it into a Region 4 CERT team. John said the more active they are, the more they stay together.

Ray said the goal is to provide traffic control for events, help out at the EOC, etc. There are many opportunities once people are trained.

COVID-19 Updates – John Elsesser:

COVID is still here. EHHD will give out free test kits if you go to their office. We don't have a supply of kits here. We used quite a few in our after-school program.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM on a motion by Bud Meyers, seconded by Jonathan Hand and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone