

MINUTES
Coventry Town Council Meeting
February 6, 2023, 7:30 PM
Town Hall Annex & Virtual

1.Call To Order, Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Thomas at 7:30 PM.

Members Present:

Lisa Thomas-Chairperson
Marty Milkovic-Vice-Chairperson
Matthew Kyer
Jonathan Hand-Secretary
Robyn Gallagher
Julie Blanchard
John French

Members Absent:

None

Also Present:

John Elsesser- Town Manager
Jimmy McLoughlin-Emergency Management Director
Bud Meyers-Fire Chief and Fire Marshal
Coventry Volunteer Firefighters and EMTs: Deputy Chief Jared Dewey, Deputy Chief Ken Boutin, Lt. Ryan Boutin, EMT Natalie Jellinek, and EMR Diane Boutin

2.Pledge Of Allegiance:

All members stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, led by the Town of Coventry Firefighters.

3.Audience Of Citizens: (30 Minutes - 5 minutes per person.)

No citizens present, Thomas closed Audience of Citizens portion of the meeting.

3.A. Coventry Fire/EMS: Presentation Of Life-Saving Awards:

The firefighters and emergency responders in attendance were presented with a life-saving award for their heroic volunteer work they displayed on December 31, 2022. The award consisted of a framed certificate, and pin to be worn on their uniform. Chief Meyers explained these volunteers responded to an emergency call regarding a patient experiencing difficulty breathing, which led to cardiac arrest. They were successful in resuscitating the patient by administering CPR, and regaining a pulse. Their actions were critical in not only saving the patient's life, but maintaining their quality of life as well. The awards were presented to Deputy Chief

Jared Dewey, Deputy Chief Ken Boutin, Lt. Ryan Boutin, EMT Natalie Jellinek, and EMR Diane Boutin. Not present but also recipients were Deputy Chief DJ Figiela, and Windham Hospital Paramedic Jonathan Hall.

Thomas thanked all present, and expressed appreciation to Meyers and McLoughlin for putting these awards together.

4. Acceptance Of Minutes:

- January 17, 2023:

Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the January 17, 2023, Town Council meeting.

By: Hand

Seconded: Milkovic

Discussion/Changes:

- Pg. 9, 5th paragraph, today is misspelled, change “toady” to “today”
- Pg. 9, 5th paragraph change “Cobalt” to “COBOL”
- Pg. 9, last paragraph, 2nd line change “relaying” to “relying”
- Pg. 11, 2nd paragraph, 2nd line from bottom, change “affective” to “effective”
- Pg. 5, under projects update, and Pg. 6, 3rd bullet, change “Lotcip” to “LOTICIP” (change throughout entire minutes)
- Pg. 5, under projects update, Swamp Street (referenced twice), should be Swamp Road (Rd.)
- Pg. 6, 2nd paragraph after bullets, change “into the cornfield” to “down to, and through the cornfield”
- Pg. 6, 1st bullet, last sentence, change “There on only 8 towns” to “There are only 8 towns”
- Pg. 11, 1st full paragraph starting with “Blanchard”, add “is” after “Watkins”
- Pg. 11, 1st full paragraph starting with “Blanchard”, last sentence, change “there” to “they”
- Pg. 11, last paragraph, therefore, is misspelled, change “therefor” to “therefore”
- Pg. 13, under discussion, cemetery is misspelled, change “cemetary” to “cemetery”

Voting:

For: Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic, Hand

Against: None

Abstain: None

- January 30, 2023:

Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the January 30, 2023, Special Town Council meeting.

By: Milkovic

Seconded: Hand

Discussion/Changes:

- change “Randi Frank Consulting” to “Randi Frank Consulting LLC”

Voting:

For: Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic, Hand
Against: None
Abstain: None

5.Consent Agenda:

All items listed with an asterisk (*) will be acted on by one motion. There will be no separate discussion on these items unless a Council member so requests, in which case, the item will be removed from the consent agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

Motion: I move to accept the Consent Agenda with item 6.A.2. removed.

By: Milkovic

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Milkovic wanted to discuss item 6.A.2. Request For Coventry Representative In Honor Of 2023 Hartford Irish Parade Grand Marshal Betty Mohan, and asked it to be removed from the consent agenda.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.Reports:

6.A. Council Chairwoman: Lisa Thomas:

Councilwoman Thomas read the following report:

- I completed the Town Council's section for the 2022 Annual Report which will soon be published.
- We were excited to have 2 new businesses open on our Main St. this month. John Elsesser, Eric Trott, members of P&Z and I presented a citation and helped with the ribbon cutting at Scrub Scraps. Scrub Scraps mission is to promote mental health development through the sport of boxing, encourage success by providing a platform to be successful, provide a recovery base for struggling individuals, and make the sport of boxing safer, more available, and more appealing by developing a beginner's tier. Scrub Scraps is the world's first and only treatment based alternative boxing program. And next week we will have a ribbon cutting for Woke Breakfast & Coffee restaurant. This is an exciting time for our Main Street since almost all of the commercial spaces are filled. This gives us great pride in our town, our staff, and the EDC who have all worked so hard to bring this important economic development to our town.
- Regarding the inordinate amount of press around Woke Breakfast & Coffee: I believe the broad media attention the issue has received is a product of "click bait" headlines. This story should never have been about comments in social media. It's about the owners choosing our town for their new business and the community's excitement over finally having a daily, early morning breakfast place with good food and coffee back in town. This type of small business is a critical asset for our community. It also creates a

vital space for social interactions. That can, in turn, help us attract additional investments to Coventry. This is especially important as our rural towns continue to move forward from the fiscal and social impacts of the COVID pandemic. I'm happy that there has been an overwhelming outpouring of support for Carmen from our community.

- Next week, Police Officer Dexter will be sworn in as a sergeant in our department. The Town Council continues to support opportunities for our police officers to further their training and to move into higher rank positions. This provides our officers with greater ability to advance their careers in Coventry.
- I held office hours twice so far this month, at the Senior Center during morning hours and then evening rescheduled hours at the library. I will hold regular hours again on Feb. 22 at the Library at 5:00 pm, and on 2/23 at 11:00 am. There has been high attendance at office hours! Issues that arose earlier this month include:
 - A desire for better signage about important town events, especially referenda, in the area of the green near Dunkin Donuts. Our electronic signboard would be good for that but needs power and staff support. Let's work on this.
 - A desire on the part of those at the Senior Center to better understand the budget process. I sent a timeline with information to Senior Center Director Brenda Bennett, and she will share via the newsletter.
 - Manny Rodrigues attended to let us know of a change in the Memorial Day parade route. This year the parade will step off from the Veterans Memorial Green, after ceremonies there. Please help spread the news!
 - A resident came to advocate for supporting fair benefits for our library staff.
 - A resident expressed concern over an ongoing blight issue. There has been some lag in addressing complaints. Our new ZEO has been addressing this and has updated Planning and Zoning on cases. Some are currently being processed and the Council will be notified as appropriate.

6.A.1.Schedule Of March 2023 Budget Meetings With Town Departments:

Thomas noted the agenda attachment was last year's schedule, and we need to put together a timeline for this year. Milkovic noted last year they met with COVRRRA and WPCA and questioned whether a meeting with them was necessary. Elsesser explained that COVRRRA was having financial difficulties, and it would be good to meet with them when meeting with DPW. He added that the WPCA has an increase in their budget, but they will not be increasing rates. He discussed with Thomas that they are fully funded by their user fees, so it is not particularly necessary to have them come in for a meeting. Hand questioned if the WPCA was having big projects this year, and if so, we should have them come in. Elsesser explained that they are still hiring engineering firms and looking at options. Four months from now would be the right time to have the WPCA come in to share their study results.

Thomas informed that the Town Manager and Superintendent's public hearing is on March 9th, the Annual Town Meeting is on April 29th, and voting will be on May 2nd. Thomas and Elsesser came to the conclusion that the last day for the council to make their final decisions and approve the budget is April 1st, and they need to work on a meeting timeline backwards from that date. Gallagher questioned if there are any departments that are not listed who are having a significant percentage increase in their budget. If there are, she suggested the council meet with them as well. Elsesser informed that even if the percentage increases are higher

than normal, the actual dollar amounts are not significant. Blanchard discussed meeting with the new assessor to go over things. Elsesser felt they could meet in May, in the meantime, he can get some memos to help answer any questions she may have. The council discussed and agreed on the following schedule:

March 6 –Regular Town Council Meeting with DPW & COVRRRA

March 13- Special Meeting following the Finance Committee with Human Services and Board of Ed

March 20- Regular Town Council Meeting with Police Department and Parks & Rec

March 27-Special Meeting following the Steering Committee with the Library and Fire/EMS

April 1- Special Budget Deliberations Meeting (Saturday)

April 3- Regular Town Council Meeting to wrap up, and last date to vote

Kyer suggested on March 30th, we should switch the order of the department presentations and meet with Parks & Rec before the Police Department. Thomas will be sending out a meeting schedule memo to all council members and departments.

6.A.2.* Request For Coventry Representative In Honor Of 2023 Hartford Irish Parade Grand Marshal Betty Mohan:

Milkovic read through the documents and felt that Betty Mohan had a lot of experience as a Coventry Resident and will be honored at the Hartford Irish Parade. He expressed that he could not go, but felt someone from the Town Council should be there. Thomas explained that they asked for a Coventry Town Councilor at the event to recognize Betty Mohan. She was also made aware that Gallagher’s brother-in-law will be the parade honoree for Hartford and suggested that Gallagher be our representative, which Gallagher has agreed too.

6.B. Council Members:

Hand discussed that they were given a tour of the new firetruck prior to the meeting. He explained it was great to see it finally arrive, we got a great deal on it, and is looking forward to seeing it in action saving structures and lives.

Kyer reported that the Town of Coventry is looking for feedback for Valentine’s Day, on why the residents love Coventry. If you submit feedback, you get a window decal to display. Elsesser commented that some of the feedback comments will be shared on the Town Manager’s Facebook page on Valentine’s Day.

Gallagher reminded everyone that there is a Kid’s Night Out event put on by the Parks & Rec Department. Kids who attend will get pizza, do crafts, and watch a movie. This will take place on February 24th.

Milkovic reported also regarding Valentine’s Day, the Lion’s Club will be selling roses. He also wanted to clarify that Thomas’s office hours are on the 22nd and 23rd.

6.C. Steering Committee: Matthew Kyer, Chairperson:

At the most recent Steering meeting, the need to fill vacancies on certain committees was discussed as follows:

- The Pension and Retirement Committee only has enough members to make a quorum.
- The Ad-hoc Protected Spaces Stewardship Committee is close to only having enough members for quorum.
- The Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Advisory Committee does not have enough members to reach quorum, and is in need of new members. However, a statement of interest from Julie Castillo was recently received to serve on this Committee. Castillo currently serves on the School Building and Energy Efficiency Committee. Steering will look to address Castillo's statement of interest at their next meeting.
- Kyer noted he was made aware of an issue with the Building Code Board of Appeals, as they only have 3 members, all of whom are registered Democrats. Kyer expressed he has reached out to the RTC to recruit some new members to this Board. Unaffiliated voters are encouraged to submit a statement of interest as well.

Steering also discussed the use of social media to recruit new members to these boards as it was successful recruiting new members to the Inland Wetlands Agency. Resignations have been accepted from Kathleen Krider from the Ad-hoc Farmers Marketing Operating Committee, Wayne Diagnault from the Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Committee, and Caroline Dowd from the Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Committee. All 3 volunteers were thanked for their time and service to the town.

6.C.1. Reappointments:

6.C.1.a. Pension & Retirement Committee: Belsito:

Motion: I move to reappoint Sam Belsito to the Pension & Retirement Committee for a new term to expire 1/1/2026, as recommended by Steering.

By: Kyer

Second: Hand

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.2. Appointments:

6.C.2.a. Senior And Affordable Housing Alternatives Study Committee - Housing Authority

Representative: Bradley:

Motion: I move to appoint Laurie Bradley to the Senior And Affordable Housing Alternatives Study Committee as the Housing Authority Representative for a life term of the committee, as recommended by Steering.

By: Kyer

Second: Hand

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.2.b. Senior And Affordable Housing Alternatives Study Committee - Town Council

Representative: Gold:

Motion: I move to appoint Richard Gold to the Senior And Affordable Housing Alternatives Study Committee as the Town Council Representative for a life term of the committee, as recommended by Steering.

By: Kyer

Second: Hand

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

Kyer discussed that with these 2 appointments made to the Senior And Affordable Housing Alternatives Study Committee, all 7 seats are now filled. He noted he will be working with Elsesser to get the 1st meeting for this committee scheduled.

Kyer also informed that at the past Steering meeting the committee reviewed the memorandum from the town attorney addressing concerns raised by Councilor French at their December meeting, in regard to the legality of actions taken by the School Building and Energy Efficiency Committee to spend funds on a 'renovate as new' study. With such concerns, the Town Manager decided to seek legal counsel and delegated the Town Council Chairwoman as the point of contact, as some of the concerns raised referenced actions taken by the Town Manager. The memorandum from Halloran and Sage is below:



MEMORANDUM

To: Lisa Thomas, Town Council Chair

From: Duncan J. Forsyth
Michael C. Collins

Date: January 18, 2023

Re: Renovate As New Study
Our File No. 17996.138

We have at your request reviewed various documents related to the appropriation of \$3,700,000 by way of a Referendum approval which passed at a Town vote on March 8, 2018. The specific issue which we have been asked to examine is the approval by the School Energy & Building Efficiency Committee ("SEBEC") to authorize the expenditure of funds for a Renovate as New Study on January 6, 2022 by Quisenberry Arcari Malik, LLC ("QAM"), the architects hired by the Town in January 2021 related to an initial scope of work for roof replacement at Coventry High School and G. H. Robertson Elementary School.

The Resolution appropriating \$3,700,000 provided, in Section 1, for "the planning, design, engineering, renovation, construction and reconstruction for improvements to various buildings and bridges, including, but not limited to (several items) all as more fully described in the 'Structural Evaluation Report, Coventry High School, Captain Nathan Hale Middle School Study dated August 9, 2011, as amended from time to time." (emphasis added)

Section 7 of the Resolution authorizes the Town Manager "on behalf of the Town to enter into any other agreements, instruments, documents and certificates... for the confirmation of the transactions contemplated by this resolution." We have confirmed with the Town's Bond Counsel that the authorization set forth in Section 7 provides for the Town Manager to enter into any and all agreements necessary to accomplish the objectives set forth in Section 1 of the Resolution.

On May 5, 2014, the Town Council gave a charge to the SEBEC which stated that the Board of Education and Town Manager had identified the need for energy efficiency repairs... and other improvements to various school buildings and other town facilities, including Town Hall and Booth & Dimock Memorial Library. The SEBEC was charged with reviewing energy audits and other plans and developing a projected scope of work with cost estimates. The SEBEC was then to present its recommendations to the Board of Education and Town Council (See, Section 4). Section 6 of this Charge notes that the Committee could request "additional funds" to assist in the development of concept

plans and cost estimates, including architect/engineer fees, if such additional funds were needed. This clearly suggests that if funds were available for such studies the SEBEC had the authority to undertake such studies. On August 3, 2020, the charge to the SEBEC was further expanded to include roof replacements at Coventry High School and George Hersey Robertson Elementary School in addition to all of the other possible improvements contemplated in the original Charge.

As noted above, the SEBEC voted to retain the services of QAM on January 8, 2021 for the roof projects. Thereafter, Town representatives had discussions with representatives of the State Office of Policy and Management and the Department of Education concerning the HVAC, and other air distribution, systems in the various schools in an attempt to obtain grant funding for those projects which also fell within the framework of both the appropriation Resolution and the Charge to the SEBEC. It was suggested by State representatives that the Town undertake a "Renovate as New Study" since such a project would be the only method, at that time, to obtain grant funds for HVAC and other air distribution systems.

In order to get a determination of the cost associated with such a project the SEBEC unanimously voted to extend the scope of work of QAM to include a Renovate as New Study for Coventry High School and Captain Nathan Hale Middle School. As funds for HVAC and air distribution systems were available under the appropriation, the SEBEC authorized the expanded scope of work for QAM which would address the needs and costs for these systems. The Town Manager, based upon the authority granted in the Resolution executed a purchase order for the additional scope of work. We have reviewed the minutes of subsequent Board of Education meetings as well as Project Updates provided by the Town Manager to the Town Council and have concluded that both agencies were advised of all actions being taken by the SEBEC and the Town Manager.

Additionally, it is important to note that Section 6-2 of the Town Charter designates the Town Manager as the Town's Purchasing Agent subject to the requirements of the Town's Purchasing Procedures. Our review of the Purchasing Procedures reveals that the hiring of professional consulting or technical services, such as architectural and engineering services, are exempt from the formal bid procedures set forth in Section II of the Purchasing Procedures. Thus, all that is required to obtain such services is the issuance of a purchase order in accordance with the Purchase Order Procedures set forth in Section III of the Town's Purchasing Procedures. We have reviewed the various purchase orders related to the professional services obtained to address the renovation projects and studies contemplated in the Resolution and Charges to the SEBEC and all purchase orders comply with the Purchasing Procedures outlined therein. Consistent with the Town Charter, the Town Manager never sought authorization from the Town Council for the expenditure of any funds for professional/technical services related to these building projects. He simply updated the Town Council on an on-going basis.

The Charges given to the SEBEC by the Town Council only require the SEBEC to seek Town Council approval for additional consulting fees, if such were not available, and the recommendation of an actual construction project. There is no requirement set forth in the various Charges that requires the SEBEC to seek Town Council approval for any

other action in its work. Further, both the Resolution and the Town Charter, as expanded by the Purchasing Procedures, provide the Town Manager with the authority to engage professional consultants, such as architects and engineers, in furtherance of the broad authorization for renovation projects set forth therein.

Thus, it is our belief that the SEBEC was within its authority to retain the services of QAM to perform additional work to determine the scope and cost of various renovations to both Coventry High School and Captain Nathan Hill Middle School and the Town Manager was within his authority, as set forth in the Resolution and Purchasing Procedures to retain the services of QAM in furtherance of the goals set forth in the Resolution and Charge to the SEBEC.

We hope that you find this information to be helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kyer highlighted the following from the memorandum:

- SBEEC acted within their authority from both the voters and the bond council to ask QA&M to produce a ‘renovate as new’ plan. SBEEC authorized \$170,000 to be spent, but the actual amount spent was \$99,220.70
- The Town Manager acted within his legal authority when signing the purchase order.
- According to the attorney’s review of the minutes, they determined the minutes reflect that all members were kept well advised.

Kyer informed that French continued his concerns at the January Steering meeting, and insisted that the Board of Ed never discussed or voted on the ‘renovate as new’ for the middle school or high school. Kyer presented a document that referenced when ‘renovate as new’ was discussed with Board of Ed members which included dates and which members were present. The document also highlights which members are of the Republican party. See below:

Renovate as new references when BOE members present:

01-10-2022 Joint Fiscal/Finance, John E. describes process, R's present = Julie & Peter

May report due date for Rusty's reno as new option and costing based on different reimbursement rate, and that it gives detailed pricing for many things in CIP list

<https://www.coventrvct.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/01102022-3089>

01-13-2022 regular meeting, joint fiscal meeting overview including reno as new, attachments include joint fiscal agenda
CW, PD, CR present

https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1668785727/coventrv/mx74vfnii42sucpepk32/01-13-2022_BOE_Aproved_Minutes.pdf

03-31-2022 – regular meeting, Mary provided update from SBEEC mtg, including Reno as new
CW, PD, CR present

<https://meetings.boardbook.org/Documents/File/53b79f03-6e9e-4811-9bfd-cf52c9f0d6de>

04-07-2022 – regular meeting, reference to Renovate as New during budget discussion
R's present – CW, PD, CR

<https://meetings.boardbook.org/Documents/File/bec863c9-e5db-48a1-867e-3797a844d8bb>

04-28-2022 – regular meeting, discussion of renovate as new

CW, PD present, CW asked several questions, deadlines for BOE approval and submission of 6/30 discussed, upcoming detailed presentation for May meeting by Rusty M discussed, etc. Beneficial cost nature for community of reno as new discussed. SBEEC agenda and minutes part of attachments

<https://meetings.boardbook.org/Documents/File/b2203064-a109-43cc-ae02-a68433085d25>

<https://meetings.boardbook.org/Meeting/In/526117?AgendaItem=12071330> – Reno as new proposal

05-12-2022 Board of Ed meeting, Agenda item – Renovate As New, update, New Business
R's present – CW, PD, CR

Overview and update that not viable given current economic info.

<https://meetings.boardbook.org/Documents/File/8be9a51f-5295-4d14-bfe5-3aed47bff25d>

06-09-2022 – Fiscal meeting – HVAC grant and funding discussed

<https://meetings.boardbook.org/Meeting/In/533811?AgendaItem=12284894>

PD present

06-09-2022 – regular meeting – SBEEC agenda and minutes are attachments

CW,PD,CR present

Mary provided report

https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1668785734/coventrv/o3sfgbb7wmvzdrxdg3om/06-09-22_BOE_Aproved_Minutes.pdf

Gallagher asked that the initials be clarified, so we know who is being referenced in the above document.

Kyer listed the following:

- CW-Chrissy Williams
- PD-Peter DePaola
- CR-Courtney Rossignol
- Mary-Mary Kortman
- Julie-Julie Blanchard
- Rusty-Rusty Malik of QA&M

French thanked Kyer for these documents, and added comment that this shows the Board of Ed met in March, 2 months after a vote had been taken by the SBEEC. French stressed that the SBEEC never went before the Board of Ed, and the BOE had no knowledge of the SBEEC proceeding with something that was going to be very dramatic to the BOE. He added it did not seem as though Kyer understood his original statement. French felt that if you had community members review these documents, they would not be able to extract where 'renovate as new' was discussed. French also expressed that it is so loosely written that anything could be done to schools, like an addition. There was no formal vote by the BOE for these actions to be taken, nor was it brought to the Town Council to make a vote. He explained that they may have had discussions for a 'renovate as new', but there was no vote to move forward. French asked that his statement from the Steering Meeting be included, it is attached below:

In reviewing the Memorandum from Halloran and Sage about my concerns about the SEBEC it's has become very clear that the language used is so wide ranging almost anything can be studied and paid for by the committee. If there is monies available in a bond account such as the Energy Bond there is no oversite to what or how much they can spend.

Lets start with the BOE, they never discussed or voted on a renovate as new for the High School or Middle School, as far as their minutes indicate. This huge undertaking by the SEBEC should have asked the Board if that's something they would entertain. This size project would take a large amount of time spent by the Board to develop the new needs of the facility. At the same time, if the Board wished to pursue this projects path, the Board would come to the Town Council to create or expand a new or existing building committees charge. That didn't happen.

At the SEBEC on October 7th ,2021 the town manager brought up the possible option of renovate as new. John Elsesser said " he wanted to run this idea by the Committee as we will need to request substantially more authorization". That discussion never happened. What happened was John put it in his project memo on January 3,2022 that SEBEC was exploring a Renovate as new project. No information was forth coming from John.

On January 6th 2022, SEBEC voted to use bond funds from HVAC bond to have QA&M to provide a renovate as new study. Mary Kortmann seconded that motion claiming that she discussed it at BOE Fiscal, and everyone agreed it was a good idea to move forward getting prices that would result from the study, it passed unanimously. There is no record of that discussion in the minutes of the BOE Fiscal and Fiscal committee doesn't have the authority to make that decision, only the full BOE does.

I suggest we as the Town Council reevaluate this building committee that was established back in 2014. A building committee should have a defined charge and not go on without end and also should not be used as a grant finder as John has claimed. In the short time that I've been on this council there seems to be a lack of procedures being followed. One would be the building committee charge number 10. The Committee maintains contact with both the Town Council and Board of Education and provide timely updates at least quarterly and seek advice as necessary. That hasn't happened in the last year. I think over the years the Town Council has become complacent by the years of service the Town Manager has provided. The wording of Resolutions, charges to building committees are so loosely written that john is able to circumvent the charter and the Council. With a new Town Manager coming aboard this July, we as the Council need to work on procedures and practices and clean up bonding and resolution language so we don't run into these issues. We the council are here to provide leadership, honesty and integrity that what our community expects and deserves.

Thomas asked for clarification on whether French was referencing a vote to move forward with a 'renovate as new' project. French explained, no, it was regarding a vote to even do it. Thomas asked what he means by "it". French clarified "it" means 'renovate as new'. French continued that if you were going to renovate as new, why

would you even do that as a sub-committee, without the BOE asking you to do such a project. He further explained, the Board of Ed is in charge of education, and they are technically lessees of the buildings. He doesn't understand why a group would get together and do this for the Board of Ed, without their permission. Thomas felt French was confusing two things. She clarified the decision that was made by the SBEEC was to do a study for 'renovate as new', to see if it was even possible. Following the study, it was revealed that it would be too costly, and it was decided not to move forward with the project. There was no decision to actually 'renovate as new', only a decision to move forward with a study. This decision was made by the SBEEC, and was within their authority. The SBEEC was encouraged by the State Department of Education to do so and find out the cost of a 'renovate as new'. This study was also prior to our knowledge of the HVAC grants that became available. The study also looked at all the things that needed to be upgraded and repaired, with dollar amounts to help us with future planning. Then the state came out with HVAC grants, which were our primary areas of concern for the schools. So, the 'renovate as new' was put aside, and the information from the study helped us know what needs to be done with the HVAC systems, helping us move forward with the HVAC grant applications.

French explained he is not confused on the matter, but felt that if a sub-committee was doing something on behalf of the Town Council, we would want them to come meet with us first, to get our approval. Especially if they are spending money. He emphasized that it is not about just spending the money though. Thomas felt that French's concerns were philosophical, but questioned legality. The attorney has signed off on the fact that all actions taken, and decisions made on this matter were legal, which is the most important thing. Thomas felt the other issues brought up regarding procedures and opinions can be taken up with Steering, and she welcomed those discussions to happen in the future.

6.C.3. * Minutes, 1/23/23 Steering Committee Meeting

6.D.* Finance Committee: Robyn Gallagher, Chairperson

6.E.* COVRRRA - John A. Elsesser

6.F. Town Manager - John Elsesser:

6.F.1.Projects Update:

Elsesser highlighted that there is an opportunity for the town, on behalf of the Fire Department, to apply for a grant. Before the application is finalized, Elsesser wanted McLoughlin and Chief Meyers to speak with the Town Council about it, as it is a significantly funded grant, but there are also costs beyond the grant.

McLoughlin discussed that the grant application would allow them to get funding for a vehicle. He discussed the specifications of the truck and the importance of having this type of vehicle, especially to get into the tight streets around the lake. Elsesser's intern has done the data entry for the questions on this application with the help of McLoughlin, Meyers, and Amanda Backhaus (Finance Director). They are currently on the 3rd layer of the application questioning thanks to the intern's help. A lot of time has gone into this, as it has been

worked on since early January. It was also discovered that a municipality our size has a maximum of a \$1M match, with a 5% contribution. The vehicle they are looking at is close to \$2M.

McLoughlin explained the typical lifespan of an apparatus is 25 years. Ours is currently 23 years old, with a 2-year lead time to get a new one. This would put us on schedule with replacement standards, but it would be a significant dollar figure to come up with not only a match, but the additional costs.

Meyers mentioned that they could refurbish the apparatus, and it would give them an additional 10-15 years out of it. However, the approximate cost of the refurbishment is \$900,000, whereas a new truck is \$2M. Additionally, refurbishing would be difficult as the steering system on the current latter truck is obsolete. If that goes, the department would lose their ability to get around the lake. It doesn't make sense to spend this amount of money on a refurbishment, when the truck could lose its functionality to a large portion of the town. Also, with a refurbishment, they wanted to be able to add more water to the truck. Current water capacity is 300 gallons, which equals 3 minutes of firefighting. However, adding more water capacity would not be possible with a refurbishment. A new vehicle would be able to hold 750 gallons of water, which gives us more time. Right now, the department often runs out of water before the fire can be put out. Milkovic asked if the old apparatus has a resale value. Meyers informed yes, and we could get approximately \$200,000-\$300,000, but in the past it hasn't worked out for us. McLoughlin informed that we could also work this into a trade with the new purchase, through the grant. Elsesser informed the grant required a 5% match, and he thinks this trade could cover it. Thomas asked what the timeline for the grant is. She was informed that this grant needs to be submitted by Friday, but it would most likely be at least 6 months before we hear back and need to go to the public for a vote. McLoughlin felt they would hear in the fall, potentially, if they were an award recipient or not.

Gallagher questioned if the grant could be used for the refurbishment of the existing truck, which it cannot. It can only be used for a new truck only. Gallagher also questioned timing, so she is aware of how quickly we would need to act if awarded, and if it was possible for this vote to be included in the November elections. Elsesser is still looking for an answer on this, as he wanted to make sure when submitting the grant, it is not implying we already have the funds which we do not. Meyers clarified that the most recent quote he received is \$1,795,000. Elsesser explained that the committee would need to come up with \$795,000 if the pricing stayed at this amount. Gallagher asked if this would be in this year's capital budget, Elsesser explained it would not be in this year's budget. He also commented that these are highly competitive grants, and this is our most competitive project, which entails a more detailed review. Gallagher questioned if the grant application would be strengthened by a statement of support now. Meyers informed that after the application is submitted, they will be reaching out to Sen. Blumenthal and Congressman Courtney to offer their support. The letters will not do much at this time as the applications are submitted through an electronic process of review, and then go through a peer review first, before going to the state. If and when it gets through a peer review, that would be the time for letters of support.

McLoughlin also emphasized that if the grant is unsuccessful, they will need to go back to the drawing board, because at some point that apparatus will need to be replaced. He noted that the latter truck they have now is one of a kind, and that there is no back up if the grant is not successful (this was a question on the grant application). Hand asked if the new truck would have 750 gallons capacity, Meyers confirmed. Hand clarified that this would increase firefighting time for the first responding vehicle. Meyers also informed that the steering system on the current truck is electronic which allows for more opportunities to fail. New trucks have a manual

all-steer system. He added we have been lucky with ours, but Manchester has an identical truck, and they have had several issues. Blanchard asked McLoughlin and Meyers how long we have had the truck, to explain how often it goes out, and how useful it is to us. McLoughlin stated the truck was purchased second hand from Rocky Hill 6 years ago. Meyers informed, in that time, this truck has gone out 56 times to service various fires, and it is very important for chimney fires. He noted it has gone out multiple times for mutual aid fires as well.

Thomas asked for clarification on the funding and cost. Meyers clarified that the cost of a new truck today is \$1,795,000, however that could change. Elsesser restated that the Town needs to contribute 5% of the cost to receive the maximum \$1M aid. Any additional costs beyond that (which are needed), would need to be covered by the town. Elsesser noted one more time, that if the existing truck was traded, it may cover the town's 5% portion, depending on its value. He thinks in reality, we would need to come up with \$750,000. He also expressed that costs are going up, and if the current truck were to die and we had to replace it with just an engine tanker, it would be about the same amount of money if we got the grant. If we do not get the grant, we need to figure out next steps. McLoughlin expressed, outside of cost, safety and time savings are significant for the firefighters. French asked how much our current one cost 6 years ago. Meyers informed that it cost \$330,000, which was a great deal. Meyers also stated in reality it could easily be 3 years before we see a new truck, from the time they hear back on the grant and putting an order in.

Thomas discussed that they are here to gauge the Town Council support and asked if there was anyone with strong opposition to the grant. No one opposed, but Elsesser wanted to make sure that the council is aware that if this path is to come, they will need to seek additional funds. Thomas noted at that point, it would be in the hands of the voters. She thanked Meyers and McLoughlin for their time and work on this. *Meyers and McLoughlin left the meeting at 8:41 PM.*

Elsesser continued with his report and discussed that Main Street is really filling out. He mentioned the following:

- Burger Fry Pie has their food service permits and believes they are done with their building permits as well. At this point they are awaiting the fire marshal's approval to move forward.
- Lakeview has reopened for the season and is looking at future possibilities.
- In the Woke Plaza a dog groomer is going in, where the old nail salon was.
- Where Sandborn Auto is, there is a private company using the space for production, but will not be an open retail store.
- In the village the only vacancy left is Village Antiques. This will be a difficult spot to fill due to contamination issues. Thomas thought they were cleaned up. Elsesser agreed it was cleaned up, but it complicates the financial aspect of a deal. A small business would not be able to go in there, it would need to be a larger company.
- Coventry collision has someone interested in their property.
- There is opportunity for new construction on Bread and Milk St., where a house is next to Boggini's.
- Pelletier Builders is under auction.

The above shows there is a lot of interest in our town, and we are pretty much out of space at this point.

He added they are trying to push the library project along. The driveway is too narrow, and the masonry part will not be able to be worked on efficiently without blocking the driveway. This work is expected to happen in a few weeks. There is also some interior work that will be starting that will cause a lot of odors and

noise. Alternative arrangements are being made for library business hours and events. During this time, they will relocate to Mill Brook Place for about 3 to 4 weeks to keep this project moving. The library board has authorized Margaret of the library to make whatever plans are needed. She will be working with the Rec department to make that happen. Gallagher suggested a walkaround in April to view progress, when they are scheduled to meet with them. Elsesser expressed that it would be too dangerous at that time, and suggested a walkaround visit come May or later.

6.F.2.COVID-19 Update:

Elsesser discussed that there are no real changes, but things are getting a little better. He informed free test kits are available at the Mansfield Town Hall through the Eastern Highlands Health District.

Thomas noted moving forward, this item will be a consent agenda item, and can be pulled should there be any changes.

6.F.3. Public Comment Opportunity: Hop River State Park Trail Signage Grant:

Elsesser discussed that we are one of the towns in the Hop River Group. He explained that they are setting up an LLC, and we will have a staff representative for that. Currently, they are seeking a grant for basic signage that include mile markers, and to have towns clearly marked. We are working with the towns included in this group to get this signage. This is a simple grant with a high impact, especially in the case of an emergency. Elsesser noted he wants the Town Council to be aware of this, and offer their endorsement.

Kyer noted that there are mile markers in the Hop River Trail in Bolton. Elsesser confirmed that those would be continued throughout Andover and Coventry, as well as note the town you are in.

6.F.4. Public Comment Opportunity: 2023 Rec Trails Grant, Hunt Preserve:

The town is putting together a TRAILS grant for the William Hunt Preserve. They are seeking public input first, so the council does not have to take action at this point. Elsesser reviewed an aerial view map that outlined the trail through the preserve. This grant will be for the addition of small plywood bridges, and allow for the Kubota to be able to enter and maneuver the area to maintain the trails.

6.F.5. Public Comment Opportunity: TRIP Grant Application:

The TRIP grant is like a rural LOTCIP program, and there will be a presentation on this at the next meeting. At this time, we are also seeking public comment. This grant will allow us to make ADA improvements to the sidewalks on South Street, by adding textures to the ramps. Also, we will add a series of LED rapid flashing beacons to crosswalks on Main Street, at the library, Bidwell Tavern, the Lake Street crossing, by the Old Tolland Tpke pathway, and at Robertson school. This is a 100% grant. Additionally, two businesses asked for standard crosswalks. One would be at Teleflex, at Monument Hill to allow the employees safe crossing. The other would be at Skungamaug golf course, as there have been 2 motor vehicle vs. golf cart

accidents this year. There will be more formal information, but right now they are starting the public information process, so we can get feedback to share with the Town Council.

Blanchard questioned how the public is made aware to make comment. Elsesser stated that these items will be announced on the Town Manager Facebook page.

6.F.6. 2022 Grand List Totals:

This grand list shows a 1.8% increase, which will bring in about \$614,000 in tax dollars. The motor vehicle portion was softened. The increase is significant, but a little less than last year as used car prices have started declined again. This is new revenue that we know, at this point.

6.F.7. * Quarterly Report: October - December 2022

6.F.8. * PZC: Cannabis Establishment Regulations: Effective 1/28/2023

6.F.9. * Notes From January 18, 2023 Staff Meeting

6.F.10. * CCM: Prescription Drug Discount Program Report, October 2022

6.F.11. * National Vietnam War Veterans Day Ceremony: March 29, 2023

6.F.12. * Connecticut's Countryside Summit Presentation

7.Unfinished Business:

7.A.21/22-18: Consideration/Possible Action: Assignment Of American Rescue Plan Funding:

Milkovic noted there seemed to be an error on the report in the proposed spending section, as they had already voted to approve the “up to” \$40,000 funding for the Town Manager search. It was noted that the report attached to the agenda was an old version from January 9th, and had not been updated. An updated version will be included with the next meeting agenda. This item will be continued.

8. 22/23-44: Consideration/Possible Action: Town Manager Search:

This item was discussed during Executive Session. Following Executive Session, the Town Council discussed that they were presented with RFPs from 3 different firms, and each firm was interviewed.

Milkovic felt Randi Frank Consulting LLC had the best application. Thomas agreed and felt they would be the best match for the needs of Coventry. The council will be moving forward with accepting the offer from Randi Frank Consulting LLC.

9. New Business:

9.A. 22/23-47: Consideration/Possible Action: Hop River State Park Trail Signage Grant Endorsement And Authorization To Serve As Fiduciary:

Motion: I move to authorize the Town of Coventry to act as the fiduciary for the Hop River Trail Alliance grant, including authorization for the Town Manager and Finance Director to act within their capacities to do so.

By: Milkovic

Second: Hand

Discussion: Gallagher asked for clarification that the authorization is for the position of Town Manager, and not John Elsesser specifically, in case it carries over into the future. It was discussed that the motion states the Town Manager, so it is whoever is in that position of authority.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

Motion: I move to create the Hop River Trail Alliance Grant Fund as outlined in the attached fund establishment form.

By: Milkovic

Second: Hand

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

9.B. 22/23-48: Consideration/Possible Action: Discharge The Members Of The CHS Walls Code Compliance Building Committee:

Motion: I move we discharge the members of the CHS Walls Code Compliance Building Committee.

By: Milkovic

Second: Hand

Discussion: Kyer indicated that at the Steering meeting, a motion was made by Steering to recommend to the Town Council the discharge of this committee, and is glad this is on the agenda. Hand

commented that he was on this committee for a while, and wanted to give recognition to Ed Cofrancesco, whose actions and efforts went above and beyond. He had direct interaction with the engineers to work on this matter and saved the town a lot of time and millions of dollars. Hand wanted to express a special thank you to Ed, as well as a thank you to all those involved on this committee.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

9.C. 22/23-49: Consideration/Possible Action: Acceptance Of Conservation Easement, Studenroth Subdivision On Goose Lane:

Motion: I move was accept the conservation easement for the Studenroth Subdivision on Goose Lane, as stated in the agenda attachment.

By: Milkovic

Second: Hand

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

9.D. 22/23-50: Consideration/Possible Action: Acceptance Of Conservation Easement, Studenroth Free Cut Lot On Goose Lane:

Motion: I move was accept the conservation easement for the Studenroth Free Cut Lot on Goose Lane, as described in the agenda attachment.

By: Milkovic

Second: Hand

Discussion: Elsesser informed that when there is a lot, you are allowed 1 free cut. After that, you need permission. Hand added that it is the 1 free time you can subdivide a lot, Elsesser agreed. Gallagher asked if the attorney checked if this complied with the rule against perpetuities. Elsesser stated he wasn't sure. Thomas informed that it seemed pretty standard, and the attorney did review this. Milkovic asked if it would transfer to the new owner once the current owner is not around anymore, and Elsesser confirmed that it goes with the land.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

9.E. 22/23-51: Consideration/Possible Action: Priorities For COST And CCM 2023 Legislative Agendas:

Thomas asked for any feedback on the COST and CCM legislative forms. Milkovic expressed there seemed to be a lot of commonalities. He noted there are several EMS items and encourages the Town Council to support solutions for the EMS crisis. Thomas noted her and Elsesser were at a press conference Sen. Anwar called to go over some goals of legislation. Elsesser was asked by COST to speak on behalf of small towns. There was a very impressive showing, with a lot of media, and the conference was packed with Fire, EMS, and Public Safety workers.

Gallagher felt education funding should be supported as well, as the loss of ECS funding is hitting us this year. Elsesser informed that he made some phone calls to places that are think-banks for education funding. They informed him, the word on the street is the Governor is continuing the freeze, and not taking the money. However, we won't know the reality of this until we actually see the budget. It does not make sense that they would want to take money for education from smaller towns. Elsesser informed he has worked on this with COST and CCM as well. Blanchard agrees with ECS, discussed she would like to see funding go to special education. French agreed with the education support and felt the state should get on board. He added the money should follow the children, not fall on each community as it happens. The Board of Ed has done a great job with establishing Coventry Academy, which has reduced a lot of outplacement funding, but it is a huge expense. Thomas has talked with Elsesser about the Board of Ed chair and her submitting a joint letter of support, to show collaboration and mutual concern to advocate for those things.

Elsesser noted he has a video call through COST with the new commissioner of the local bridge program, so he plans to address their inconsistent funding during the call. He noted they are giving money for federal matches, but need to focus on the smaller bridges too.

Gallagher also mentioned that municipal solid waste should be supported too, which is in both CCM and COST. This has been an increasing cost for our community and there needs to be a sustainable plan to address this. Thomas mentioned the Governor has also put out a statement about municipal solid waste issues but hopes to hear about it in his State of the State Address, and in his budget. She summarized that the Town Council is suggesting support for education, public safety (Fire/EMS specifically), and solid waste.

Milkovic asked about the municipal youth camp, meaning our after-school camp will need to be licensed. Elsesser confirmed, and that it would lead to a \$30 increase per child as licensed nurse staff will need to be available. However, it is just for town programs. If it is run by the school, they do not have to do this. Elsesser felt it was overkill, as we have great safety and care for our camps and run recreational programs all the time. He stressed that it would be hard to find the staff, and it seemed that a lot of towns would simply get rid of their summer camp.

Elsesser also stated that there are a lot of bad bills out there. One of which, that is going to public hearing, the Police pensions have to be equal to MIRA, which is the state pension fund. This would be very expensive for the town.

Thomas asked the best way to let COST and CCM know the areas of these legislative agendas that the Coventry Town Council wants to support. Elsesser informed at some point they will have public

hearings for or against a specific item, so we will want to be ready with testimony. Thomas feels we should have a testimony drafted, as sometimes we only receive 24 hours' notice. Blanchard commented she would also like to see prevailing wage increase added as well.

9.F. 22/23-52: Consideration/Possible Action: Acceptance Of Conservation Easement In Maynard Subdivision On Broad Way:

Motion: I move to accept the conservation easement in Maynard Subdivision on Broad Way.

By: Milkovic

Second: Hand

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

10. Miscellaneous/Correspondence:

10.A. * Thank You Letter Opposition To Takeover Of Day Kimball Hospital:

10.B. * Senator Jeff Gordon, Introductory Correspondence:

10.C. * Board Of Education: Minutes, 1/12/2023, Agenda, 1/19/2023:

10.D. * Public Hearing, Town Of Bolton, February 8, 2023: Amendment Of Zoning Regulations Pertaining To Cannabis:

10.E. * Public Hearing, Town Of Mansfield, February 21, 2023, Proposed PZC Amendments Related To Affordable Housing:

10.F. * Public Hearing, Town Of Tolland, 2/27/23: Proposed Amendments To Zoning Regulations:

11. Executive Session:

- Selection of Executive Search firm for Town Manager recruitment

Motion: I move that the Town Council enter into Executive Session pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(E)-discussion of any matter which would result in the disclosure of public records or the information therein contained described in sub-section (b) of Section 1-210 with the following people in attendance Town Council members Matthew Kyer, Jonathan Hand, Robyn Gallagher, Lisa Thomas, Marty Milkovic, Julie Blanchard, John French and Town Manager John Elsesser.

By: Milkovic

Second: French

The Town Council moved to Executive Session at 9:20 PM.

Thomas made a side note that Johnson Memorial Hospital submitted to shut down their labor and delivery division of their hospital. She wants to have a public session and send in a request from the Town of Coventry. This will be attached on the next agenda.

Motion: I move to exit Executive Session at 9:52 PM.

By: Gallagher

Second: Hand

12. Adjournment:

Motion: I move that the Council adjourn at 9:54 PM.

By: French

Second: Gallagher

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole Archambault

Nicole Archambault, Minutes Clerk

**PLEASE NOTE: These minutes are not official until approved by the Council at the next Council meeting.
Please see the next Council meeting minutes for approval or changes to these minutes.**