

Minutes
Local Emergency Coordination Committee
August 5, 2021
(Virtual meeting due to COVID-19 safety guidelines)

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM.
Present: Julie Blanchard, John Elsesser, Laura Stone, Mark Palmer, Bill Watkins, Ted Opendbrouw, Bud Meyers, Jim McLoughlin
Absent: Matthew O'Brien, Jr.
2. **Audience of Citizens:** none.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:**
Jim McLoughlin moved to accept the minutes of the June 3, 2021 meeting, seconded by Mark Palmer. The motion to accept the minutes as modified carried on unanimous vote.
4. **Coming Events:**
 - **30th Annual Steeplechase – August 21, 2021.** John Elsesser noted that plans for this event are routine and there have been no previous problems. It is a 30-mile bicycle race, and not all participants do the whole length. It comes through a small section of Coventry on Depot Rd/Rt. 31. There are no plans for police department or EMS support.
5. **COVID-19 Update –John Elsesser:**
 - John Elsesser reported that positivity rates are up – the Delta variant is more contagious. Lots of Town Halls are re-masking, including Coventry. The public is receptive. A supply of masks is available at the rear entrance should someone from the public need one when visiting. Staff is appreciative. We will stay at this level and see how it goes. The new strain seems to be impactful for children, and there have been reports of breakthrough cases in vaccinated individuals. Although most of those cases appear to have mild symptoms, those individuals are still contagious and can spread the virus.
 - There is a vaccine clinic coming up in Bolton – children down to age 12 are eligible.
 - The schools have received no guidance from the Governor's office yet. He has said that municipal leaders can make their own decisions. Mandated vaccinations for municipal employees are not yet in play but that may change if it is implemented for State employees.
 - Jim McLoughlin said that the Fire Department implemented a mask mandate on Monday for all visitors, and staff if they are inside or in the apparatus. There has been a lot of conflicting information but we are erring on the side of caution.

Agency updates:

Police Department – Mark Palmer:

- We made two conditional offers of employment to certified officers from New London and Manchester. Screening is nearing completion and he hopes to forward recommendations to the Town Manager by mid-month.
- Car thefts continue to plague the state. There has been no legislative action for persuasion to stop. It is getting more violent in some instances. If police interrupt an act in progress and they take off, we can't give chase. In our town, thefts and car burglaries are down. We are doing an aggressive "lock your car" campaign.
- The Sergeant's exam is pending in September.
- We made offers to two part-time dispatchers. One has successfully completed training and the other starts training this week.

The Town Council had discussed an issue regarding lake levels and damage caused by boaters' wakes during the recent high water levels after Tropical Storm Elsa. He has been in touch with CT DEEP and they feel we can develop some sort of ordinance regarding operation of vessels within the limits of town. This is encouraging and he will put a draft together.

Fire/EMS/Emergency Management –Jim McLoughlin:

- We ordered a new ambulance and ET.
- We received information from DEMHS about anticipated mass gatherings – we don't see anything we can't manage at the local level.
- We submitted preliminary damage assessments from the last storm for possible reimbursement.
- We are experiencing issues with ambulances that are out of service for a variety of causes. Jim met with UConn to develop a MOU to share resources.
- The CivicReady notification for the road closure as a result of the accident on Bread & Milk Street worked well.
- Bunker Hill Road Bridge is still closed. A temporary repair with future full replacement is planned. We will keep an eye on it.
- We discussed developing joint contracts with DPW, and may possibly present recommendations to join forces for better efficiency. Jim is also investigating the possibility of a central supply office vs. managing supplies separately.
- We placed an order for a stair chair – ours was out of service and is too old to re-certify.

The Department is planning an ice cream social event next week.

Fire Chief – Bud Meyers:

- During the month of July we responded to 248 calls.
- ET 418 has a safety recall – we are working with the vendor on the repair.
- Ambulance 518 was in an accident, and also has a safety recall. We will work with DPW to resolve.
- The ice cream social is being planned by Bud and Beth, keeping COVID-19 safety guidelines in mind.
- The roster of permanent officers was implemented on 7/1.
- A five-year strategic plan is in the works.
- We are starting OSHA compliance review.
- We signed a contract with CVFA. A dissolution is in the works for NCVFD, with a variety of issues to resolve.

Coventry Public Schools – Ted Opendbrouw:

- Two exterior cameras were installed at GHR to address blind spots. One has a very good view of Cross Street if video is needed. Video footage is retained for 14 days.

Two Homeland Security grants have been submitted and we are waiting to hear back. John Elsesser noted one of the grants could provide a match for fire alarms at CHS/Hale.

Public Works – Bill Watkins:

- We are busy with post-storm issues, including problems on Broadway, Trowbridge, and South. We worked with Earth Dynamics on the large issues.
- We are behind on some projects as a result of the weather. We started cut and patch, and chip seal is pending in a couple of weeks.
- The train road reconstruction project on Carpenter, Trowbridge and South River will start approximately August 16.

- Improvements are being made at the lake gate to allow it to be raised and lowered by one person to clear debris. This will be a big improvement.
- Daily flows at the treatment plant were up by a third after the rain events. We need to improve capacity.
- Snake Hill Road has over 20 dead trees. Eversource is coming to do their part of removal by September 1. We're hiring a contractor for our part of the work. It will be a huge project and will require street closure.

Town Manager – John Elsesser:

- We are working on radio tower issues, and working with TN to look at their potential use of our old frequencies, as well as some increased capacity. This will allow better reception in the north than they have now.
- A 5G company wants to come onto Pelletier tower. Fire is still using that space, so we will have to work on it. Verizon wants 5G at the Town Hall tower, but that would use up our remaining load. We objected and they withdrew. A resolution is pending. We want 5G, but we still need our tower capacity. We need an engineering evaluation to reinforce the tower, or reduce the weight of existing equipment.
- HVAC and school roof projects: the building committee and Town Council are working to seek additional funding. The cost escalated from \$17 p.s.f. to \$34 p.s.f. We have to go back for more money, even with the 55% in State reimbursement. The Council is taking action on the roof project on August 16 for a Town Meeting on August 30, with work to be done next summer. The HVAC project is more complicated. The State is saying no to additional money, saying to use American Rescue Plan funds. We are discussing what the Board of Education adopted. There is a shortfall of \$3-5 million. The building committee is looking at alternatives tonight.
- The Council is also looking at the transfer station site for a girls' softball field. We are looking at a Town Meeting in September to get it on the November ballot. The plan would improve traffic and pedestrian safety and parking, over previous concepts to construct it at the gravel pit. It would provide better visibility for the field, too. The move of the transfer station would be more cost-effective for the deployment of equipment, and would be more centrally-located for residents. We are in the process of hiring an engineer for the design work.
- Some culverts on Bunker Hill and Pucker Street need attention. We would like to attempt to apply for the next round of local bridge funding. This has to be carefully planned and we may have to do temporary repairs. We will work with Todd Penney when he returns from vacation.
- John will be out of state on vacation from August 10-18. Amanda and Mark Palmer will cover.

6. Other Business:

- Mark Palmer said we got a complaint at the end of the school year from a resident about traffic at the grammar school backing up onto Main Street during pick-up/drop-off times. They asked for police officer support and we can't commit to that. Maybe someone from the schools can keep an eye on it. Mark and Ted will meet to discuss.
- Bear sightings have been reported in Town. A social media campaign will be done.

7. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 PM on a motion by Mark Palmer, seconded by Jim McLoughlin and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone