

**MINUTES
COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL
JANUARY 19, 2021
7:30 P.M. – REGULAR MEETING
TOWN HALL ANNEX & VIRTUAL**

1. Call To Order, Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order by Blanchard at 7:35 p.m.

Members present:

Julie Blanchard – Chair – remote

Lisa Conant - remote

Jonathan Hand – remote

Matthew O'Brien, Jr. - remote

Matthew O'Brien, Sr. - Vice Chair – remote

Lisa Thomas - remote

Richard Williams – Secretary – remote

Members absent:

Also present:

John Elsesser – Town Manager

Amanda Backhaus – Finance Director – remote

2. Pledge Of Allegiance:

Council members and Staff stood to recite the pledge.

3. Audience Of Citizens:

(30 minutes)

Submit comments to be read aloud to: audience@coventry.org

Blanchard read comments from the following citizens. The statements are attached to these Minutes.

Robyn E. Gallagher, 984 Main Street – Thanked the Council for allowing the citizens a vote on the library renovation as well as the neighbors who voted in favor.

Christine Pattee, 98 Brookline Road – Wrote in support of COST Affordable Housing Legislative Platform and mentioned the recommendations most applicable to Coventry.

4. Acceptance Of Minutes:

- **January 4, 2021**

Motion: I move to accept the minutes of January 4, 2021 meeting.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Hand

With the following corrections:

- Page 3, item 6.B., second paragraph, last sentence – change to “We should be supportive and helping in any way that we can be.”.
- Page 6, item 6.E.1., first paragraph, second sentence – change to “If we were move the Transfer Station COVRRRA would be responsible for the cost.”.
- Page 7, item 6.F.1., fourth bullet point – change “Engineer” to “Engineers” throughout.
- Page 8, second paragraph, fourth sentence – change “Jen Rogers” to “the Softball Committee”.
- Page 8, second paragraph, sixth sentence – add “with” after “meet”.
- Page 8, second paragraph, twenty-second sentence – change “Rogers” to “Rodgers”.
- Page 9, first paragraph, third sentence – change “alternative” to “alternating”.
- Page 9, item 6.F.4., third paragraph, first sentence – change to O'Brien, Sr. asked is performing the application in July effective?”.
- Page 10, item 7.A., second paragraph, last sentence – add “suggestion” after “one; change “failing” to “trying”.
- Page 11, fourth paragraph, fourth sentence – add “right” after “amendment”; change “check” to “checked”.
- Page 12, third Motion, Discussion, third sentence – change to “O'Brien, Sr. if we are going to speak to an attorney we should ask if the Council can change their procedures and are there limitations based on precedents.”
- Page 13, third paragraph, seventh sentence – change the second “of” to “off”.
- Page 13, third paragraph, eighth sentence – change “Issued” to “Issues”.
- Page 14, second paragraph, first sentence – change “be” to “been”.
- Page 14, second paragraph, second sentence – remove “the” after “situations”.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Thomas, Conant

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 members 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.

By: Conant

Seconded: Hand

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None
Abstain: None

6. Reports:

6.A. Council Chairwoman: Julie A. Blanchard

Blanchard said she had nothing to report on.

6.B. Council Members:

Hand said he attended the Council of Small Towns meeting virtually. O'Brien, Sr. and Elsesser attended also. The Town was represented well and a couple of questions were submitted about reimbursement or to push for reimbursement for school ventilation type projects and other school related COVID-19 expenses. We had the Governor's ear; we got the questions in front of him and it looked like our message was received. Hand thanked Elsesser and O'Brien, Sr. for their questions to the Governor.

O'Brien, Sr. related the Governor said it would be on their dime for the excess COVID-19 expenses for being Open Schools and make it a priority for those schools that have remained open. The Governor said such schools may be at the front of the line. O'Brien, Sr. said Elsesser spoke about ventilation in schools in Coventry, and all schools in the state, and they seemed to agree that was a major priority for funding. O'Brien, Sr. also thanked Elsesser for doing a great job in representing Coventry; Blanchard and Hand agreed. O'Brien, Sr. said Elsesser mentioned sending legislation over to the House to extend the sewer. This was done by Tim Ackert and another representative. Ackert will push harder to move it forward.

Conant said she wanted to give a shout out to the David Hayes Foundation. PBS will be airing a show about the sculptures on February 11, 2021 at 10:00 p.m. with a re-airing at a later date. There will be a lot of footage of Coventry as well as the sculpture field. Conant read the following statement on behalf of herself, Lisa Thomas, and Jon Hand:

January 19, 2021

An assault on our Constitutional system of government on any level threatens our American democratic republic on all levels. We were all shocked and horrified to witness the violent riot, murder and attempted insurrection that occurred at the Capitol building in Washington D.C. on January 6, 2021. It was a direct attack on Congress, our Constitution and our peaceful electoral process.

On this evening before the Presidential Inauguration, we, the Democratic caucus of the Coventry Town Council, denounce this violent assault and attempt to overturn an election, and we mourn the loss of life that occurred. We invite our Republican colleagues to join us in doing the same, and to stand with us in support of the right of free expression, our American democratic values, and the processes of American governance as set forth in our Constitution.

Whether on the local or on the national level, free and fair elections and the peaceful transition of power have been a hallmark of our democratic republic and an inspiring ideal for other countries around the world for more than 230 years. We affirm and

support the electoral process ordained by our Constitution, as well as the election officials and workers in Coventry and across the country, who work tirelessly to safeguard our elections and ensure that they are open, honest and fair to all.

We also affirm our support for law enforcement, and we unequivocally reject the intentionally misleading, instigating and dangerous rhetoric that preceded the riot, as well as the ensuing violent acts that resulted in the tragic deaths of a military veteran and two Capitol police officers. As a recent memo from the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, "The rights of freedom of speech and assembly do not give anyone the right to resort to violence, sedition, and insurrection."

We believe that we as Americans are all stronger together. We must uphold our constitutional government over the chaos, threats and affronts to justice that we witnessed on January 6. In the words of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday we just commemorated, "We must learn to live together as brothers [and sisters] or perish together as fools."

We hope that the entire Council will join us and adopt this statement in support of our country.

Lisa Conant

Jonathan Hand

Lisa Thomas

O'Brien, Jr. said the Republicans are fully supportive of that statement. There is no excuse for the violence that occurred on January 6, 2021; it was outrageous. The deaths did not have to happen and he hopes it never happens again. It was an attack on the Capitol; it was an attack on elected leaders. He was in disbelief. He thinks it overshadowed the fact that there were people there who really wanted their voices to be heard and exercise their first amendment. It's a shame that whatever group that infiltrated the Capitol ruined that for Republicans and for any groups in the future that want to exercise their first amendment rights because we are going to see lock downs and government buildings and areas that are off limits that we won't be allowed to be near and express our political concerns. Violence is never okay, it's never acceptable. O'Brien, Jr. calls on all Republicans and all people in Coventry and all towns in Connecticut to remain peaceful. Continue to make your voices heard but make sure that you are not being part of insurrections or violent protests that happened or may happen. Blanchard agreed and said she would always denounce violent protests but she would support freedom of speech. It is your right as an American to protest things but it should be peaceful. Blanchard thanked Conant, Thomas, and Hand for putting this statement together.

O'Brien, Sr. said he agrees with what everyone has said. He said he was proud of the hundreds of thousands that went there and peaceably protested and had their voices heard. It is a shame that a small group was able to damage the day. The whole incidence was totally uncalled for and had no purpose. He abhors the violence; it was ridiculous and it should never have happened. There were hundreds of thousands there that did not act that way and he was proud and pleased to see that.

Thomas thanked all Members for joining in on this statement. She thinks this is a really important moment for all of us as a Council and to remember this moment going forward. She thinks it is a really good example to our community. She knows there are other communities where council members have put forward a similar resolution and not all of the colleagues at the council table have supported it. We've made a really important unified stand tonight saying we support everybody in our community and we support seeing people express themselves in peaceful ways.

O'Brien, Jr. asked can we get that as a formal resolution? O'Brien, Sr. asked can we get the statement in writing and we will get that adopted? O'Brien, Sr. said it sounded great, he is not disparaging it. He would like to see it in writing before it is adopted.

Conant will forward the statement to Elseser and Laura Stone. It can be put into a resolution format and the Council can work on that at the next meeting.

6.C. Finance Committee: Matthew O'Brien, Sr., Chairperson

O'Brien, Sr. wants to reserve the ability to add to his report when the Minutes are available.

Coventry Town Council Finance Committee Meeting(s)

January 11, 2021

Report to the Town Council at the January 19, 2021 meeting

The Committee was joined by the Wendy Rubin and Caterina Merriam from Parks and Recreation to discuss this year's department budget and the upcoming budget process for the 21-22 budget.

Currently the department is projecting an approximately \$75,000 shortfall in the current year budget. This is being caused by the restrictions and cancellation of programs due to Covid-19.

Wendy Rubin said that they could not realistically reduce hours during the current year. It was agreed that the Finance committee will recommend to the Town Council that we carefully monitor the department's expenses and ask they realize any savings that they can and revisit this later during this fiscal year. The committee recommended before June 30th we determine if there are any surplus funds in other departments that can be transferred to the Recreation budget and if needed the Council should provide additional funding to help balance the department's budget for this year.

We discussed the upcoming budget discussions. Wendy and Cat asked if the Town Council would consider making some structural changes to their budget including adding the Recreation Supervisor position to the Town Budget and moving the lifeguards to the Special Revenue Fund. They also asked the Council to consider allocating more funds for capital items in the Recreation budget.

After discussion, we asked Wendy to put together two or more presentations for our budget discussions. One that would keep the current structure as it is and another that would incorporate the changes that they were proposing.

We also discussed that much of the Recreation budget is program driven and it will be necessary to make recommendations that take into account the possibility of cancelling or curtailing some of their programs – such as the summer camp and providing the Council with the possible impacts based on a range of assumptions. It was also noted that the Town budget

is not responsible for the program expenses because they are paid by fees so changes in the programs would impact fees and staffing.

The Board of Education Finance Committee, the Superintendent and the Finance Director joined the meeting at 7 pm.

We received presentation of the annual audit from Blumshapiro which is now CLA.

The audit was successfully completed with cooperation from the Town and School Systems staff and the auditors expressed their clean opinion of the financial statements, the State Single Audit Report and the Federal Single Audit Report

The Finance Committee recommends that the Town Council accept the Audit.

Microgrid

We received an update from Microgrid LLC on the progress of their application. They are moving forward now that they have received the necessary approval from PURA and they gave us some indication of the process and timetable moving forward. There is still much work to be done before we get to the point when we can discuss the final proposals.

We discussed the Board's financial reports.

The Chairman spoke about the Federal Relief Plan and the almost \$500m of funding for education in the money that Connecticut is receiving. We discussed that the Board should expect to be eligible for additional funding for Covid expenses under the plan.

It was noted that they received \$53,211 from the initial CRF funds and another \$47,500 from the latest round. The Board said that they intend to remove the costs associated with this grant funding from their reports and create a new grant fund to show the expenses and the grant funding that covered them.

We also discussed that the latest Relief package from Congress extended the Federal Meals program through the end of the school year. The fund has been generating more money from delivering more meals including for weekends. The Cafeteria fund remains substantially better funded compared to recent years without including the \$60,000 of Covid savings that the Board transferred into the fund and should expect that to continue.

Next we talked about some Budget indicators as we begin the budget discussions.

The Chairman reminded everyone that the Town Council had used \$310,000 of general funds to balance the 20-21 budget without a tax increase. The Town also eliminated at least one position which will need to be funded in the budget. The Board of Education had removed \$200,000 of capital projects – some of which may need to be included in the upcoming budget. So we are starting budget deliberations with a big hole to fill.

Then we discussed the Pension Plan. The recommended increase in our contribution to the Plan, based on experience, is that the Board increase their contribution by about \$150,000 and the Town will need to add about \$25,000 to its contribution.

We also discussed our Insurance fund. The actuaries are recommending that the Town increase their contribution by at least 10% and the Board's contribution should increase by between 5 and 10%.

The superintendent shared information about the Open Choice program. He explained that the intention is to bring in students to fill available slots in the kindergarten and first grade and then

The Members of the Board of Education Finance Committee left the meeting.

Our committee discussed the Town's reports.

We discussed the COVRRRA fund. Amanda said that her current numbers reduced the projected fund balance by the amount of the expenditure to clean up the Stewart property and it is now \$25,000. We discussed that COVRRRA will be paying between \$77 – 87,000 towards the landfill cap project and that would further reduce the funds available. We discussed that we will likely need to raise our COVRRRA fees again this year as the pricing changes for recycling continue to have the fund running in an annual deficit.

We then moved to discuss the possibility of relocating the Transfer Station to the property behind the public works department. This location is centrally located in town and there would be benefits to having the transfer station adjacent to the PW property.

Rebuilding and relocating the Transfer Station has been estimated to cost about \$200 to 225,000. It is clear that the COVRRRA fund cannot support that spending at this time.

John Elsesser recommended that we keep the land in COVRRRA for now and suggested that we may be able to get a STEAP grant or other grant to use, if we decided it made sense to relocate it in the future. We discussed that we could also pay for the clean-up expenses with other funds and return those funds to COVRRRA. It was decided to recommend leaving it as it is for now and keeping an eye on our COVRRRA balance and possibly revisit this decision in the future.

The committee recommends to the Town Council that we do not relocate the Transfer Station and that COVRRRA absorb the costs of the Stewart property clean-up – at least for now.

We adjourned.

Respectfully,

Matthew O'Brien Sr.
Chairman, Finance Committee

Motion: I move to add an item to the agenda regarding not relocating the Transfer Station at this time and to use funds from COVRRRA to pay for the clean-up expenses of the Stewart property.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Thomas

Discussion: Blanchard said that will be agenda item 8.C. 20/21-45.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

Motion: I move that the Council determine not to relocate the Transfer Station at this time and to have the COVRRRA fund take care of the expenses for the clean-up of the Stewart property.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Discussion: Elsesser had a question/clarification – is that intended to release the \$200,000 set aside on that account at this time? O'Brien, Sr. said yes, the money would no longer be set aside. Elsesser wanted it noted for the record that you are releasing the set aside funds because we are not proceeding at this time. O'Brien, Sr. said yes, the motion has the effect of having us release the funds.

Seconded: Williams

Thomas called for point of order. This matter was added as item 8.C. on the agenda and we are not there yet.

6.C.1. * Monthly Financial Reports

6.D. * Steering Committee: Matthew D. O'Brien, Jr., Chairperson

6.D.1. * December 28, 2020 Minutes

6.E. COVRRRA – John A. Elsesser:

Elsesser reported COVRRRA is trying to implement the cashless payment system and Christmas tree pick up free of charge at Laidlaw and Miller Richardson continues.

Williams asked Elsesser how many of all the Town employees and the Board of Education (BOE) are out on COVID-19 and how is that accounted for? Elsesser said he cannot say about the BOE and does not have the numbers from the Town side off the top of his head.

Hand asked if Williams means COVID and not COVRRRA? Williams said it is hard to hear everyone and he was hearing COVID rather than COVRRRA. COVID-19 agenda item is a few items down on the agenda.

6.F. Town Manager – John A. Elsesser

6.F.1. Projects Update

Updates to Elsesser's distributed report are:

- Human Services will run a drive-through food bank on January 29, 2021. They are preparing boxes and will distribute to anyone who wants it. We are trying to do what some other towns have done instead of calling and making an appointment. At this point, we want to make sure that people have food and not worry about procedures. This will take place from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Information about this will be going out on social media.
- LED lighting project was delayed due to COVID-19. Most of the town buildings had been finished. The last two were CGS and Robertson. The lighting is now being installed there and they have been able to finish up the waste water treatment

plant. The project has to be completed at the high school but the contractor does not want to go into the building right now because of COVID-19. We will have the conversion to LED lighting at all town buildings completed soon.

- Softball update – the landfill option costs have been received and the plan should be received before the meeting of the Softball Committee. They will then have all the pieces of information to start their deliberation of what their recommendation is.
- The Engine tanker is back in town and operational. The refurbishment of the tanker will extend the life of the truck for 10 years at 40% of the cost of a new one.
- Annemarie Sundgren, Human Services Director, is scheduling the first Community Conversation virtual luncheon discussion. That date will be sent out. Sundgren is working with the BOE to get this going.

O'Brien, Sr. said he knows we've gotten costs for the gravel pits and now the landfill. It was discussed at one point that there might be other options, such as if there is some good flat land out there it might be the most economical way to go. Who's role is it to determine if there are other options? Elsesser said he suggested that to the Softball Study Committee. They are responsible for investigating, not staff.

6.F.2. COVID-19 Update

Elsesser said the rules changed of the groups to get vaccinated and he is outraged. They put as a priority those 65-75 years old as the next group, setting aside teachers and essential employees including public works and front-facing staff. With trying to keep schools open Elsesser said he thinks it is a real mistake not to vaccinate staff. March is being talked about now for teachers being able to make appointments and it will probably be two months after that for the actual vaccination. We will be pretty much through the school year before we have vaccinations for teachers, public works, social services, and other front facing staff.

O'Brien, Sr. said the Governor took a bunch of heat for this decision. O'Brien, Sr. said he agrees with Elsesser.

Thomas thanked Elsesser for making that statement. A lot of teachers went back into their building under the assumption that when the vaccine became available they would be receiving it. It is becoming a daily occurrence that students are testing positive for COVID-19 in the Windsor school system. It raises anxiety levels. It is concerning that the messaging has been that kids don't get COVID-19 and now we are getting these children that are sick and some are painfully sick. We didn't prepare our psyches, our children, or our families for this. Kids are getting sick and they are all not doing great. We should stay mindful of that. Windsor is in class learning four days a week as of Monday. Kids are going to be eating in classrooms. We know that when people are eating is one of the top transmission times. O'Brien, Sr. asked if they have traced the source. His daughter is a teacher and it seems all of their cases are coming from family members. There is not a wide transmission from student to student in her schools. Thomas said that is the reporting the Windsor school system is getting; she knows she is seeing more and more of these notices. Thomas can't imagine there aren't some in school transmission. One class has been quarantined for the second time in four weeks

and the kids are home for ten days and those families are scrambling for ten days. O'Brien, Sr. said he thinks teachers should be on the list earlier.

Elsesser said he is still talking to staff of maybe changing some things in Town Hall without negatively impacting tax collection for the next two weeks. The numbers are not stable and we will see what happens in our region now that UConn is back.

Elsesser said to answer Williams question – as of today we don't have anyone out on COVID-19 leave. Backhaus said for tracking time of those out for COVID-19 there are six reasons on the Family Firsts Care Act that an employee can be out. The first three are related to the virus, including quarantining or child care. We are required to track that separately and it is a separate W-2 reporting requirement. She assumes the BOE has been tracking this on their side. That act ended December 31, 2020 with an optional period for employers to provide it through March 31, 2021.

O'Brien, Sr. said the reports from the Department of Public Health have shown a spike of activity in Coventry in the past two weeks. O'Brien, Sr. urges everyone to continue taking the regular precautions because there is more prevalence in our community. This is a serious matter and we are hoping that we are nearing the end.

Conant said she agrees with O'Brien, Sr. She noticed in the reports for our region the majority of cases are 19-24 year olds which is sobering and a bit unexpected. We also received info that there are ~70 students at UConn that tested positive through the dual process with the majority being asymptomatic. Testing is required before they go back to classes.

Williams asked Thomas if her district is remote teaching/learning or in the building? Thomas said the vast majority are in the building and it is hard to get permission to teach remotely. Even with a doctor's note numerous requests have been denied. Williams asked Backhaus if anyone from the BOE or the Town side is out sick due to the virus is that a reimbursable expense? Backhaus said no as a public employer it is not reimbursable but that Coventry has been providing the benefit up to 80 hours based on the Act for employees.

O'Brien, Sr. said we learned during the Finance meeting from the BOE that they are offering full in-person school and 38% of students have chosen remote. He thinks they are doing a great job; they've kept the schools open and the options are there for families that choose to take advantage of them. Thomas said it was interesting to hear at that meeting that the fully remote population was at 11% at the beginning of the year and now it is up to 38% as people become more concerned.

6.F.3. Microgrid Update

Elsesser said there was a positive meeting with the Consumer Council with one of the two conditions of the PURA permit. A plan was supported for equitably and fairly billing the residents at Orchard Hills. They gave assurances for the DEEP master meter plan review. This week we are looking at the cost allocations of who will pay for

waste, heat, and light. They feels these items are necessary to finalize this with their financing group.

6.F.4. CCM: 2021 Legislative Program

Elsesser said this is what the Board adopted. If there are specific issues Members want the Town to focus attention on or steer away from share those thoughts with Elsesser via email.

6.F.5. CRCOG: 2021 Legislative Agenda

Elsesser said CRCOG also adopted theirs at the annual meeting.

6.F.6. COST: Affordable Housing Legislative Platform

Elsesser said the issues of sewer and water expansion are clear on the Council's support where it makes environmental sense based on traffic and development.

6.F.7. Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee: Survey Data

Elsesser said the survey data shows the level of interest and demographic information about house ownership. You can see that people have a lot of equity in their house. They have the ability to put that equity towards something a more suitable housing arrangement without getting too expensive. That is where more dense housing comes in saving on land costs, driveways, and other costs that go along with lower density. The Committee continues to work on this.

Thomas said she found the responses interesting. The questions asked are really good and she likes how the data was presented. O'Brien, Sr. said the staff working on this was a big help but he has left. Elsesser said he is trying to finish this up for us while working full-time elsewhere. Elsesser's intern has done some data input. The survey was well designed and 513 responses is an amazing response rate.

6.F.8. Parks And Recreation Budget

Elsesser said this was covered in the Finance meeting minutes. This will be monitored through the year.

O'Brien, Sr. said Parks & Rec is projecting a \$75,000 loss through the end of the year. He recommends we monitor this and transfer any surpluses from other departments.

6.F.9. Ecosystem Consulting Service: 2020 Monitoring Results: Coventry Lake

Elsesser said the annual report on the lake shows it to be pretty healthy. The hydrilla is under control. The stream off of Woodland Road washes the chemical away. Dr. Kortmann will be working on the best approach for application in this area so the hydrilla is treated. One proposal is to hand pick it out and let it dry on shore. A complicating factor is that it cannot be transported away. Other proposals are to vacuum it out including some muck or to reuse the benthic barriers. There will be a meeting next week for the action plan that is needed for the grant application that is due in February.

Elsesser clarified that hydrilla has been found at the boat launch in a past season. He has prepared a letter to DEEP requesting boat launch monitoring. He is waiting for input on the letter from the Council.

6.F.10.CT State Library: Historic Documents Preservation Grant Notification

Elsesser this is a small grant of \$5,500 for the indexing of old land records.

6.F.11.* ProAct Prescription Drug Discount Program Report: October 2020

7. Unfinished Business:

7.A. 20/21-25: Consideration/Possible Action: Amendment To Council Rules Of Procedure: Conduct of Meeting, Order Of Business

Blanchard said this discussion is about changing the limitation from 500 to 750 words because that equates to five minute speaking time and the Council has made the exception to receive emails while having virtual meetings.

Thomas recalled Conant suggested the possibility of timing the reading of the letters to five minutes. When the timer is up the reader stops at that point but the entire statement gets attached to the Minutes instead of having to count the words in a statement.

O'Brien, Sr. said statements should be succinct without having to be cut off. Thomas said that is a fair point. Conant also agreed. If you run a timer it can depend on how fast or slow the reader speaks. Having the 750 words limit gives a definitive quantifier.

O'Brien, Sr. and Blanchard do not think this requires specific changes to the Council Procedure Rules.

O'Brien, Sr. said it was determined that the Rules allow a response from a Member about a citizen's statement. Does that mean while the citizen is still at the podium or wait until that portion of the agenda has been completed? Blanchard said her interpretation is to wait until that portion has completed. It is not intended to be an interaction. The O'Briens agreed. Conant asked if it would be required to answer or could a response be given at a later meeting. Blanchard would want to leave it open and an answer can be given at a later date if necessary.

Motion: I move that the Council take this off the agenda.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded by: O'Brien, Jr.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

7.B. 20/21-29: Consideration/Possible Action: Modifications To Charge, Human Rights Commission

Elsesser said attached to the agenda is a summary of supplemental charges of Human Rights Commission to help them do other things.

This matter was referred to Steering with the information provided to consider a change to the charge.

8. New Business:

8.A. 20/21-43: Acceptance Of Audit, FY 19/20

Motion: I move that the Town Council accept the audit as presented.

By: Sr.

Seconded: Jr.

Discussion: This is a very good audit; all who worked on this were thanked by Blanchard.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

8.B. 20/21-44: Senior Housing Study Alternatives Committee: Request For Modification Of Charge To Extend Timeline

Members felt the due date for the report, within 6 months, is not to be interpreted as an end date for the Committee. Hand would like them to continue the good work that they have been doing. Thomas would like to keep it simple by not changing the charge and using the interpretation mentioned above.

The consensus of the Council was to allow the Committee to continue their work. The Council would have the study done correctly. They understand the impact COVID-19 has had and appreciate the Committee's hard work.

Blanchard said the Committee or a report from it is welcome to come before the Council at any time.

8.C. 20/21-45 Transfer Station relocation/Stewart property clean up

Motion: I move that the Council not move forward with the relocation of the Transfer Station and release the funding that has been set aside in the COVRRRA funding. The COVRRRA funding will be responsible for expenses incurred from the clean-up of the Stewart property.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: O'Brien, Jr.

Discussion: Thomas is wondering what the repercussions are to releasing the funds and not being set aside for future Transfer Station needs. Backhaus said that was an internal commitment that was done by the Town Council. The funds remain with COVRRRA funding

but switch from COVRRA operating to COVRRA capital. There are no repercussions. Elsesser said it can keep the fund from going operationally negative. O'Brien, Sr. said if it were not released we would not be able to come up with funds for the landfill project that is needed for the STEAP grant.

Hand said he does not want to see the project of moving the Transfer Station permanently shelved. He understands that is not the case based on the discussion; we are rearranging the money to have a viable balance right now.

Elsesser added this is a good time to put this on hold to see where the State is heading with waste management. One point is to see if the tonnage changes with people working from home. There will be new requirements for waste handling.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

9. Miscellaneous/Correspondence:

9.A. * Board Of Education: 1/14/2021 Agenda

9.B. * Bethel: Make COVID-19 Vaccine Voluntary

10. Executive Session

- **Labor negotiations**

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 the seven Council members, John Elsesser, and Amanda Backhaus.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Jr.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

- **Manager evaluation**

Blanchard said this is not ready for discussion. She asked to schedule this for discussion at 7:00 p.m. before the next Council meeting. Backhaus will be included and will provide the Zoom link.

Council entered Executive Session at 9:20 p.m.

11. Adjournment:

Motion:

Respectfully Submitted,

Yvonne B. Filip

Yvonne B. Filip, Town Council 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.

Amanda Backhaus

From: Gallagher, Robyn E. <RGallagher@wiggin.com>
Sent: Monday, January 18, 2021 7:03 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Library

Dear Members of the Town Council:

I live at 984 Main. I am writing regarding one of my favorite Main Street neighbors – the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library. Thank you to the Town Council for choosing to allow the citizens a voice in whether or not money would be invested in this invaluable resource. Thank you, as well, to my neighbors who voted in favor of the project.

The Booth & Dimock Memorial Library has consistently been one of my family's favorite places in town. It was there for my family with activities and events when both my children were very young. It has been there, providing access to picture books and early reading books as my children move through grade school. I anticipate that my family alone has saved several thousand dollars a year by taking out books rather than purchasing them.

And the library, and the amazing library staff, have continued to be there for my family throughout the coronavirus pandemic. We love seeing updates on the library Facebook pages, with ideas for science projects or how-tos for drawing pictures. We have continued to enjoy the relationships built with library staff (and in particular, Ms. Rachel, who was spot-on when she recommended the Dory Phantasmagory books for my daughter –thank you, Ms. Rachel!). Importantly, the pandemic has underscored the continuing importance of books in our lives meaning that the value offered by the library will continue to grow.

While we look forward to a time when we can gather with friends at the library again, it is worth noting that the library is offering both book pick-up and in person services. Indeed, the in-person services go above and beyond what is offered by libraries in many of our surrounding towns. In addition, there are many online resources available including, of course, books. I encourage anyone who is going stir crazy at home to look into the many resources made available online through the Booth & Dimmock Memorial Library. The fact that these services, including in person services, can be offered safely shows that our library staff are willing to go the extra mile for this community.

Thank you for your time.

Robyn

Robyn E. Gallagher

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www.wiggin.com



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Amanda Backhaus

From: c2pattee@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 11:54 AM
To: Coventry Audience
Cc: Jon Hand; Julie Blanchard; lthomasoutside; Matthew O'brien Jr.; mjclkc@hotmail.com; Matthew OBrien; Richard Williams Jr.; John Elsesser; Eric Trott
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for COST Affordable Housing Legislative Platform-Public comment. January 19, 2021

To: Coventry Town Council
From: Christine Pattee, 98 Brookline Road Coventry Connecticut
Re: Support for COST Affordable Housing Legislative Platform
Public comment. January 19, 2021

I'm speaking in support of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns Affordable Housing Legislative Platform.

The COST recommendations most applicable to Coventry are:

- Address water and sewer capacity issues – the single, most significant limiting factor to construction of affordable housing in our town.
- Build on successful affordable housing programs, like the Incentive Housing Zone Program that identifies zoning overlay areas where developers can increase housing density in exchange for creating mixed-income housing.
- Adhere to responsible growth principles by applying smart growth strategies that help communities create more affordable housing in environmentally safe and sustainable ways. The good news on this last one is that this is exactly the course laid out for the Planning and Zoning Commission in the 2020 edition of our POCD.

As a member of the Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee and in researching housing costs on my own, it's becoming clearer and clearer that without government support, it is impossible to build affordable housing. We've always known that government subsidies are required to build housing for low income folks. However, in today's construction market, some kind of governmental support, if not outright subsidy, is also necessary for housing affordable to people of moderate income who already own a small home.

At our SHASC meetings, Coventry's limited sewer availability comes up again and again. Common sense-wise, everybody knows that it's significantly less expensive to build a house with sewer and water

connections rather than put in an individual well and septic system. But everybody also knows that increasing sewer capacity will cost millions of dollars, and that will never fly in our current political environment

Coventry's 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development calls for examination of current zoning restrictions and prohibition on multi-unit housing in the Lake Area Residential Zone. While there is a scientific formula to determine the land area necessary for a home's well and septic system, there is no such formula for how many units can be built on a piece of land with sewer and water connections. The PZC has barely started to address this, but the possibility has been raised to identify large enough areas off the lakefront, but in the sewer area, that might be appropriate for a special zoning district allowing multi-unit housing in that area alone. No one wants multi-unit construction on the lakefront itself.

As for the COST recommendation to "build on successful affordable housing programs", SHASC has been working with the Local Initiatives Support Commission [LISC], and so far I've found out that **I** am eligible for low income housing support. I have worked all my life, first as a teacher, then as Director of Statistics in the Connecticut Public Health Department. My combined Social Security and state pension income is about \$52,000. A single person household making less than \$52,850 is considered low income because it is 80% of the Area Median Income [AMI], which is HUD defines as \$97,900 in Coventry's region. My home on two acres in a lake association is worth maybe \$225,000, below Coventry's median home sales price in 2017 of \$243,500. We know anecdotally that there are virtually no openings in any of the affordable housing complexes in surrounding towns. All have year or longer waiting lists.

In the interests of the nearly 2000 Coventry residents over 65, in the interests of your parents, and maybe your own interests, I urge all Town Council members to support COST's Affordable Housing Legislative Platform.

