

Alyson Averett

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Coventry Town Council

1712 Main Street
Coventry, CT 06238

Dear Members of the Coventry Town Council,

My name is Alyson Averett, and I am a Junior at Coventry High School. For my civic's class I have decided to write to you to voice my concerns and opinions to advocate for change. I have lived in Coventry my whole life and I know I am not the only one who believes that our community is missing something. We are a smaller town, which means that we usually live here in the same houses for most of our lives, and watch our community grow around us. There have been an abundance of pizza restaurants that have come into Coventry, and many businesses that come and go from the same buildings. Though it might seem like a lot, we still lack services that could be beneficial to most residents; especially those of us who want to be more involved in our community.

A statement made by the Coventry Economic Development Commission says, "A vibrant community needs a balance of residential and commercial activities. The Town of Coventry welcomes business development, which compliments and enhances the town's rural and historic character and is appropriate for the neighborhood. Town boards and staff stand ready to bring this to fruition." Looking at this statement, and then comparing it to Coventry, we do not have that balance that we strive for. A 2018 survey conducted by the Urban Institute was held for the needs and wellness of residents in town, ages 18 to 64. The common factors revealed were needs for entertainment, job opportunities, and tax relief. Overall, when towns have businesses that pay more on taxes, it lowers the tax rates residents pay. Adding businesses into small towns like ours provides jobs, keeps more money in our community, support's local charities, and even amplifies the life of our town.

It is definitely easier said than done when implementing business into a small town. Some problems that would be encountered are the expenses, resident opinions, and lack of appropriate land for building. Though it is expensive to put a new business into town, franchises like Dunkin' here in Coventry, like to be in small community settings where there is little business

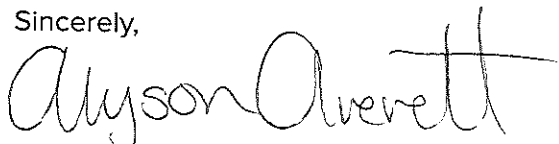
competition and regular buyers. The money always seems to stay in the community when we don't necessarily have to leave town for services. Which brings us to the next issue which is how some residents of Coventry would feel about this. Some people, especially those who are older, argue that they don't want to bring 'those people' into our town. Without them coming right out and saying it, they are concerned about Coventry becoming like Manchester or any inner city. There is no way that people from larger towns with shopping malls will travel all the way to Coventry for our services. As students and teenagers, we don't always have the luxury to travel outside of Coventry when we need a service, or even when we need a job. On the topic of land for building, Coventry has a lot of abandoned town-owned properties, and empty lots. The best thing to do is to use it to our advantage, to revive our town. If people looked at the big picture they would see how it benefits us all.

In a town like ours, I can agree that there is no need for a Walmart or shopping mall. Like stated before, the Dunkin' franchise is here in North Coventry. There was rumor of people wanting a McDonald's in town, which I agree would be a bad idea. Dunkin' is perfect for a town like ours that has local buyers but it is not the healthiest option. For example, a smoothie place would not only be a healthier option, but could create some much needed business competition for Dunkin', like there is between CVS and Walgreens. In the past, Dunkin' and other places like Blaze Pizza have held fundraisers for our school. Adding a franchise that would have no issues fundraising for our school would create more of a togetherness of our town. As you know, North Coventry has a Dollar General being built. Where in South Coventry, next to the town hall is an empty lot that can be a possible building site for a new, vibrant, and intriguing food/drink service.

Thriving businesses in small towns, create thriving communities. Residents, in turn, tend to shop locally, neighborhoods and schools get better, and the quality of life improves across the board. An interview in August of 2019, led by Tim Leininger, asked the town manager, John Elsesser what he did to maintain his diplomatic demeanor, and asked about his future plans. He said this: "The diversity of opinions matters. That includes me. There's times when I've gone 'Hmm, I hadn't thought of that' and that's important... But I still have things that I think I can add value to the community." Coventry truly is a nice town and knowing that the opinions of other people are valued, gives our community hope for growth and multiple opportunities.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alyson Averett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alyson Averett