

Town Council Steering Committee Meeting

April 25, 2022

7:00 PM

Town Hall Conf. B

Video Link to Meeting:

<https://coventryct.viebit.com/player.php?hash=NJ3NBBaZ6x0a>

Call to Order, Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chair Matthew Kyer at 7:00 PM

Members Present:

Matthew Kyer, Jonathan Hand, John French, John Elsesser (Town Manager), Lisa Thomas (ex officio, Council Chairwoman-Remote)

Also Present:

Nicole Archambault (Minutes Clerk-Remote), Interviewees for Land Use Boards (See Below)

Acceptance of Minutes: March 28, 2022

Hand motioned to accept, French seconds

Vote-Unanimously All in Favor.

Changes:

- Change John to Jon
- Pg. 1, Item # 5, add “her” before resignation
- Pg. 2, item #8, add “Post” after Legion, to read “American Legion Post 52”
- Pg. 2, 1st Rodrigues paragraph, 2nd Line, add space between sentences
- Pg. 2, last paragraph, 4 lines up from bottom, second that in the sentence should be “they”
- Pg. 2, last paragraph, same sentence, change VFE to VFW
- Pg. 2, last line, after Boy Scouts, add “for the”
- Pg. 3, 1st sentence, add Oxford Comma after Eagle Scouts
- Pg. 3, 1st paragraph, second MK line, change no to “not”

Interviews with Candidates wishing to serve on major Land Use Boards

Kyer informed all candidates that no action will be taking place at this meeting. That Steering does not appoint or reappoint any members, rather recommends to Town Council the appointment or reappointment so that they can take the action. This will happen at next week’s Town Council Meeting.

- Interview with Cathy Mitchell for Appointment to the Economic Development Commission

Kyer: Thanked Mitchell for coming in, and for her interest in serving on the Economic Development Commission, and explained that Steering is interviewing those who are looking to serve or continue to serve on Land Use Boards so that a recommendation can be made to the full council for action. Noticed it was not her first time applying. Asked what her Coventry Vision is.

Mitchell: It would be nice to bring it to a point where we have control over businesses coming into town. Have benefits that benefit small businesses, and to keep the quaintness. For example, the look of the

buildings that are built. Does not want to see big box stores coming in. Expressed that she has been in the town 15 years as a business owner (Daniel Rust House Bed and Breakfast).

Hand: Reviewed statement of interest form, understands where she is coming from as he has heard these concerns before, and they seem to be popular in town. Thinks she has a lot to offer.

French: Expressed he was happy to see that she is bringing in the experiences of running a business to the Commission.

JE: Noted there is an investment incentive policy benefit for small businesses.

Mitchell: Gave kudos to Elsesser for making the town better.

LT: Asked how her experience as a small business owner, and how B & B fits into town. Also asked what more could the Town do to help.

Mitchell: Easy to set up, feels that concerns are heard and there is back up from the town. She understands that the B & B is not a tourist attraction like Mystic, but there are attractions such as the farmers market, UConn events, etc. to pull in travelers. They are seeing more business this year than in previous years/months. She understands it's a business that is not busy all the time, but they are definitely rebounding after COVID and being shut down. As far as helping, maybe be included in flyers that go out to note that accommodations are available with them.

Kyer: Asked what skills she brings into the Commission, and if she has any conflicts that would be an issue.

Mitchell: Knows business talk and has connections with small business owners. She expressed there would be no conflicts as she is not political. She either likes things or doesn't and votes/forms opinions that way. Wants to help the town grow, but in a way that it is controlled.

Kyer: Thanked her for her time.

- Interview with Brian Murray for Appointment as an Alternate to the Planning & Zoning Commission

Kyer: Thanked Murray for coming in, informed that Steering was sitting anyone down who was to be appointed or reappointed for Land Use Boards. Asked what Murray's direction for Coventry within Planning & Zoning.

Murray: Consistency. Worked for Travelers for 15 years, seeing business data and data trends and would like to bring that to the table. Would also like to see more goods and services closer to home with the increase of working from home, both core businesses and small businesses.

French: What is the reason you want to be on Planning & Zoning?

Murray: Has sat through a lot of planning and zoning meetings lately. Planning & zoning is of interest to him. Feels that if you want to see change, you should get involved.

Hand: How do you see your experience applied?

Murray: Data analyzing experience, familiar with claims submitted, risk analysis to both the Town and Business. Has a unique perspective to look at things with his background.

French: What business did you own?

Murray: Owned retail motorcycle business in Willington. Familiar with regulation process.

Thomas: Talk to us about broader scope of focus for the Town and concerns you have. What he has noticed with neighboring towns with research.

Murray: The vineyard is an area of concern. He believes all businesses need to follow health codes laws, as well as state and local laws. Especially with alcohol consumption and not following the regulations. Does not want to shut down the winery, welcomes it, but wants it to conduct business legally and follow regulations. With research, looked into crowd sizes, what is used in Columbia, Tolland, and Pomfret. They have more defined regulations. We are allowing things via special permits, and the special permits should allow the activities, however with the special permit regulations should be followed. We should have more comprehensive regulations as neighboring towns. Data was shared with Lisa Thomas during her office hours.

Kyer: What specific skills would you bring to benefit Planning & Zoning? What are conflicts we should be aware of?

Murray: Risk and risk tolerance. Willing to do the work, have a comprehensive view, and use critical thinking. For conflicts, a grievance was filed with Eric Trott against the Vineyard. In the future would need to abstain or withhold comment on those matters.

French: Liked the analytical approach on the chart with neighboring town data.

Kyer: Thank you for coming in.

- Interview with Bob Burrington for Reappointment to the Planning and Zoning Commission

Kyer: Questioned if Bob was interviewed when he first joined

Burrington: Yes, I was interviewed 4 or 5 years ago.

Kyer: Thank you for your service and interest in being reappointed. What is the direction Coventry should be taking?

Burrington: The same path they are already on. Keeping it a country place, but becoming modern, and keeping it quaint to fit with the niche, in terms of business appearance.

French: How long have you served, and what was something that was unique while serving on the Commission? What was your personal feeling with Cumberland Farms?

Burrington: 5 years on Planning & Zoning. The most difficult was Cumberland Farms. There was a lot of debate, back and forth discussion over a long period of time. A lot of hours went into this project. It was a personal one for me, as I was the only one who voted no, due strictly to safety concerns. However, the new intersection was not apart of the plan at the time, once that is fully complete, it should alleviate the safety concerns. Has since changed his view.

Hand: Are you aware of any data with the Cumberland Farms being there for some time, since the intersection is not complete?

Burrington: None at this time, but it does not seem to be too bad.

Hand: How have you found your experience on Planning & Zoning, or pressures of dealing with the Community?

Burrington: Hasn't felt any pressures. Learned a lot, enjoys being a part of it.

Thomas: What more can we do to support Planning & Zoning? Why don't we have ways to increase commercial taxes, to alleviate the taxes on the homeowners?

Burrington: See the village brought up, with floral shop, bakery, craft like store with Etsy-like sales. No more used car lots.

Kyer: Thanked him for his time

- Interview with Darby Pollansky for Reappointment to the Economic Development Commission

Kyer: Noted she was not interviewed the first time around, as she was fulfilling a remaining term from a former member. Now, if reappointed, will serve a 5-year term. What is your Coventry Vision?

Pollansky: Been on Planning & Zoning since '92. Make improvements in Planning & Zoning. Filling Spaces. We have room and needs for business in town. Maintain the rural character but expand the space. Put in and support businesses that complement the town, help with tax space, and create jobs.

Hand: Skills that you have that will benefit the EDC.

Pollansky: Have my own business (Pollansky Construction, since 1990. Dirt work, and Certified Septic installers in Coventry.), and business experience. Has knowledge of the Town. Thinks she has a lot to contribute.

French: Thanks for your service on Planning & Zoning. How would you entice new businesses to come into Town?

Pollansky: Knowing the certain areas and availability to expand. Being able to discuss and share those with interested businesses. People have inquired on the availability in town.

Thomas: Things that would make a significant step to re-engage with small business that can offer services to the town.

Pollansky: Identifying properties that have potential, antique store that can be converted into a restaurant because of access to water and sewer. Categorizing sites by level of improvements and readiness.

Hand: What is your availability in attending?

Pollansky: The EDC only meets once a month, as did the Wetlands that she was on previously. Since resigning from that commission, there is availability to make the commitment to EDC.

Kyer: Thank you for coming in.

- Interview with Bill Jobbagy for Reappointment to the Economic Development Commission

Kyer: Before the interview, want to thank you for your previous and continued service. (Jobaggy has served on Planning & Zoning since 2006, and the EDC since 2002). What is your vision for Coventry?

Jobaggy: Offset taxes from homeowners. Be in a good tax space with businesses. Have more local jobs and have a mix of things residents need in all age categories. Make the town easier to live in.

Thomas: Has no questions, as she is familiar with Bill and his service.

French: Likes how his statements are well-rounded and inclusive. It shows how important the community is to him. Do you have a favorite story from being on the Boards?

Jobaggy: Public hearings. Most people are sincerely there to give opinions and concerns. Gives me great satisfaction to see look of relief on their face that they are actually being heard and listened to. Enjoys that Teleflex is such a high-tech company working in such a historic building. Has good management now and staff is diverse.

Elsesser noted they were going to relocate to Mexico but were able to be convinced otherwise.

Hand: Has no questions for Jobaggy as he is familiar with his experience and involvement. Feels that Jobaggy has been a big part of fashioning the vision that is currently in place for Coventry.

Jobaggy thanked the staff, and thanks were returned from Steering members for his time and extensive service.

Reports:

Chairperson: None

Committee Members: None

*** Review/Possible Recommendations: Board & Commission Monthly Reports:**

These were carried over from previous meeting, and Board wanted to look at report. Kyer asked Elsesser for update and if there were any vacancy concerns.

JE- Walls committee will be almost nonexistent come July and will not be needed. School building committee has picked up the slack. Walls committee can be absorbed by School Building Committee. As far as vacancies go, we are doing OK in general. Looking for a retired builder or contractor to have someone who knows what they are talking about to be an asset to the HUD Rehab/Fair Housing Committee.

Resignations/Not Wishing to be Reappointed:

Ad-hoc Protected Spaces Stewardship Committee: Glenney

Hand-moves to accept his resignation with regret and thanks for service, French seconds

Vote: Unanimously All in Favor

Reappointments:

CoventryVision: Butler

Hand moves that Steering recommend to Town Council the reappointment of Butler to CoventryVision, with term ending May 3rd, 2025, French seconds.

Vote: Unanimously All in Favor

CoventryVision: Stone

Hand moves that Steering recommend to Town Council the reappointment of Stone to CoventryVision, with term ending May 3rd, 2025, French seconds.

Vote: Unanimously All in Favor

Economic Development Commission: Jobbagy

Hand moves that Steering recommend to Town Council the reappointment of Jobbagy to the Economic Development Commission, with term ending February 1, 2027, French seconds.

Vote: Unanimously All in Favor

Economic Development Commission: Pollansky

French moves that Steering recommend to Town Council the reappointment of Pollansky to the Economic Development Commission, with term ending February 1, 2027, Hand seconds.

Vote: Unanimously All in Favor

Planning & Zoning Commission Alt: Burrington

Hand moves that Steering recommend to Town Council the reappointment of Burrington as an alternate to the Planning & Zoning Commission, with term ending November 1, 2024, French seconds.

Vote: Unanimously All in Favor

Appointments:

Ad-hoc Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee: Slater

Kyer: Left message for Slater that there are no openings on the Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee at this time. Thanked her for her interest. Has yet to hear back but hoping there is another Committee she is willing to serve on.

Economic Development Commission: Mitchell

Hand moves that Steering recommend to Town Council the appointment of Mitchell to the Economic Development Commission, with term ending February 1, 2023, French seconds.

Vote: Unanimously All in Favor

Planning & Zoning Commission Alt: Murray

Hand moves that Steering recommend to Town Council the appointment of Murray as an alternate to the Planning and Zoning Commission, with term ending November 1, 2025, French seconds.

Vote: Unanimously All in Favor

Before moving to item 8, Elsesser noted that there is a vacancy on the Wetlands Commission as a secondary suggestion to Slater. Also noted that in order to serve on any of the Town's committees or commissions, an individual must be registered to vote.

Discussion: Concerns regarding scope of Veterans Memorial & Events Commission

Kyer: Wanted to discuss a little more on this as the March Steering Meeting was abbreviated after they had heard from Manny Rodrigues. Would like the chair of the VMEC to join Steering at the May meeting.

Elsesser: Noted to amend any ordinances in anyway, we would need to include other duties the commission could do as well as add a clear definition of what the events are classified as.

Kyer: Wants to carry items forward. After hearing from Manny, it would be good to hear from the Chair of VMEC, Peter Depaola. Asking Laura Stone to invite him to May meeting, and also requesting to have a review of the volunteer handbook added to the agenda for May and have the handbook sent out ahead of time to all members for review and to come prepared with any further edits to discuss and act on at the next meeting.

Adjournment

Hand moves to adjourn at 8:34 PM, French seconds

Submitted by,

Nicole Archambault

Nicole Archambault

Steering Committee Minutes Clerk

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