

Minutes
Town Council Steering Committee Meeting
April 27, 2020

Town Hall Conference Room B – and virtual participation via ZOOM application

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Matthew O'Brien, Jr.
Present: Matthew O'Brien, Jr., Jonathan Hand (ZOOM), Lisa Conant (ZOOM), Julie Blanchard (ZOOM).
Also present: John A. Elsesser, Town Manager

2. **Acceptance of Minutes:**
Lisa Conant moved that the minutes of the February 24, 2020 meeting be adopted, seconded by Jonathan Hand. The following corrections were requested:
 - Item 7A, third line: change 'residence' to "residents."
 - Item 7B, last line: change "how" to "now."
 - Page 4, item 7I: add "that" after "noted."
 - Page 5, change "Merger" to "Transition Study."The motion to accept the minutes as corrected carried unanimously.

3. **Reports:**
 - A. Committee Chair:** no report.
 - B. Committee Members:** no reports.
 - C. Review/possible action, Monthly Board/Expiration/Vacancy Reports:** Matthew O'Brien, Jr. asked for an opinion of the most urgent vacancies. John Elsesser stated that the Energy Committee has severe quorum issues, CoventryVision has just enough members to meet and the Veterans Memorial Commission does not have enough members but that may be addressed by changing the charge. Jonathan Hand also raised the question on whether Michael Hicks remains on the CHS Walls Building Committee since it does not show as vacant. John Elsesser stated he thought there was a resignation and would verify with the Town Clerk.

4. **Reappointments:**
None.

5. **Appointments:**
 - A. Economic Development Commission:** Matthew O'Brien, Jr. reported he had been contacted by Barbara Pare, who withdrew from consideration for the vacancy on the Economic Development Commission due to meeting date conflicts with the Board of Education. Both Jonathan Hand and Lisa Conant expressed appreciation for her volunteering and understood the scheduling conflict.

Matthew O'Brien, Jr. invited Cathy Mitchell to join the meeting via ZOOM to discuss her interest in serving on the Economic Development Commission. Cathy introduced herself as the operator of the Daniel Rust Bed and Breakfast, having moved here 13 years ago. She is thrilled to be in Coventry and this is the second business she has started. She was approached by Barbara Barry

to encourage her to apply for this position. Matthew O'Brien, Jr. asked Cathy what she thinks the town needs. She replied more services for repeat business instead of one-time business. Businesses need affordable rents. She loves the "warm feel of our local business leaders." She feels events like the Village events and CoventryFest help. She sends her visitors to attend these. More fine dining would be great. She believes in the town. Jonathan Hand expressed appreciation for her thoughtful answers. Lisa Conant comment positively on her characterization of "Rural Friendly." Matthew O'Brien, Jr. thanked her for her time and discussed next steps. Three candidates remain for the vacancy since Howard Haberern also withdrew: Cathy Mitchell, Carolyn Gerrity, and Andrew Ladyga.

Matthew O'Brien, Jr. said it wonderful to have three qualified persons for this position and that the choice would be difficult. All three Steering Committee members mentioned concerns with the appearance of possible conflicts of interest for Andrew Ladyga due to his land ownership of key parcels, and even though he offered to abstain from votes. All agreed that having a member fully participating in all discussions was important.

Jonathan Hand moved that the Steering Committee recommend to the Town Council the appointment of Cathy Mitchell to the Economic Development Commission, term to expire 2/1/2025. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant.

A general discussion of the remaining candidates ensued. Matthew O'Brien, Jr. pointed out that Carolyn Gerrity is a Certified Financial Planner, which would be helpful. Jonathan Hand mentioned that Carolyn has only lived in town for 10 months, vs. 13 years in town for Cathy, along with owning a local business. Discussion of party affiliation was brought up. John Elsesser stated the appointment could be from any party. Matthew O'Brien, Jr. felt the Republicans are under-represented. John Elsesser mentioned that additional vacancies may open up and that he would talk with Matthew O'Brien, Jr. after the meeting.

Matthew O'Brien, Jr. called for a vote. Jonathan Hand and Lisa Conant voted in favor of the Mitchell appointment. Matthew O'Brien, Jr. abstained. Motion carried.

B. Parks and Recreation Commission – Carlson: Lisa Conant moved to recommend that Beverly Carlson be moved from an alternate to a full member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, term to expire 1/1/2021. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and unanimously approved. Beverly's long tenure in town and knowledge of recreation was noted.

C. Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee – Wilmot: It was noted that the Coventry Housing Authority requested to have existing committee member Roberta Wilmot as their designated representative. Laurie Bradley will also stay in touch with the committee. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend that Roberta Wilmot be designated as the representative for the Coventry Housing Authority. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and unanimously approved.

6. **Veterans Memorial Commission – Amendment to Charge:** John Elsesser went over the changes to the Commission’s charge, which would broaden the scope to include veterans-related events. After a brief discussion, Lisa Conant moved that the recommended changes be forwarded to the Town Council for consideration. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and unanimously approved.
7. **Policy on Town Council Interaction with Town Staff:** Julie Blanchard said that she is still considering whether changes to policy on interaction with Town staff are needed. She wanted a thoughtful approach. Jonathan Hand said he appreciated this and stated everyone is on the same page. The issue will be continued on a future agenda.

Jonathan Hand raised a related issue on the minutes of the Finance Committee regarding the Council’s budget goal, and felt the minutes may not be truly reflective of what occurred or was conveyed to the Council. He asked if a video of the meeting was available. John Elsesser said he would check and reminded all that the Finance Committee minutes are draft only and not yet discussed or approved by the Finance Committee.

8. **Public Gathering Ordinance:** John Elsesser stated that not a lot of work was done on the public gathering ordinance. Matthew O’Brien, Jr. asked if it was discussed by the Local Emergency Coordinating Committee. John Elsesser said it was, and there was some concern with over relaxation of current ordinances. There were points that there was agreement for clarification and change, and we will work on it for the next meeting. This issue will be carried forward to the next meeting.
9. **Burdette Request for Policy:** John Elsesser stated that the Town’s Labor Attorney and Town Attorney have completed a draft review of Jennifer Burdette’s request for a policy covering relations of Coventry Law Enforcement personnel. He stated that as a draft document it should be discussed in Executive Session by the whole Town Council. He will forward it this week with the understanding that it is confidential.
10. **Modifications to Burn Permits/Ordinances:** John Elsesser stated he is waiting for some updates from Bud Meyers, Fire Marshal, on the proposed modifications to Coventry’s burn ordinances. This item will be carried forward to the next meeting.
11. **Adjournment:** Jonathan Hand moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:59 PM, seconded by Lisa Conant and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

John A. Elsesser
Town Manager