

**Town of Coventry
Town Council Committee
Public Hearings & Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2020**

- 1. Public Hearing: Consider Amendments to Section 2-32 (“Departments Created and Described”) and Section 42-3 (“Establishment of a Town Fire and EMS Department; Purpose”) of the Town Code:** Matt O’Brien Sr. called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 pm.

In attendance were: Julie Blanchard (Zoom), Richard Williams, Lisa Thomas, Matt O’Brien Jr. (Zoom), Matt O’Brien Sr., Lisa Conant (zoom), and Jon Hand (Zoom)

Also in attendance: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Amanda Backhaus, Finance Director (Zoom), James McLoughlin, Fire/EMS Director

Matt Sr. read the legal notice: Notice is hereby given that the Coventry Town Council will hold a hybrid public hearing on Monday, September 8, 2020 at 7:00 P.M. to consider an amendments to Section 2-32 (“Departments created and described”) and Section 42-3 (“Establishment of a town fire and EMS department; purpose”) of the Town Code as follows: The revisions to Section 2-32 set forth the list of Officers of the Fire Protection/EMS Department of the Town of Coventry. The revisions to Section 42-3 include: A list the Officers of the Town Fire and EMS Department; a list the Members of the Board of the Town Fire and EMS Department and; setting forth the duties of the Officers of the Fire and EMS Department. The foregoing summary has been provided in lieu of publishing the proposed amended Ordinances in full. This document is prepared for the benefit of the public, solely for the purposes of information, summarization and explanation. This document does not represent the intent of the Town Council of the Town of Coventry for any purpose. Copies of the complete proposed amended Ordinances are available for inspection on the Town's website, www.coventryct.org.

John Elsesser noted that since the transition committee recommended moving forward with the merger as of July 1, we need to do some cleanup to the language in the Charter to accurately reflect the composition of the new department. The Transition Committee and LECC both reviewed the proposed changes. He noted Jim McLoughlin, the Town’s Fire/EMS Director is here to discuss. Jim noted he is present to discuss the proposed changes. He noted he has worked with both the Fire Transition Team and the Board of Fire Officers diligently to work towards the merger of the two departments, which went into effect July 1, 2020 on an interim basis. Based on that, the descriptions and ordinances needed to be updated. All changes have been reviewed by Jim himself and the Fire Chief. He feels the ordinance changed proposed support the merger and will continue to support their efforts going forward.

Julie Blanchard thanked everyone who has worked so hard to make this happen. The merger is truly a great thing for our Town.

Jon Hand noted a few clerical errors that he would like to be addressed. Starting in 42-3:

- First paragraph, Second Line – replace random letter s with “is”
- First paragraph, Second Line – insert comma between “rescue” and “and”
- Second paragraph, Second line – remove random “the”
- Second paragraph, 4th line – remove duplicate period
- Second paragraph, 6th line – add comma after “rescue”

- Paragraph 3A, 1st line – reverse “be” and “shall”
- Page 2, 3rd line down – add a comma after “rescue”
- Page 2, 5th line – need period after “Fire Chief”
- Page 2, 6th line – change period after “competitive process” to a comma
- Page 2, 7th line – too many spaces between “in” and “the:
- Page 2, Paragraph B, second line – add comma after “rules”
- Page 2, Paragraph B, second line – add a comma after “rescue”
- Page 2, Paragraph B, third line – add a comma after “rules”
- Page 2, Paragraph C, first line – comma after “services”
- Page 2, Paragraph C, third line – comma after “recruitment”
- Page 2, Paragraph D, third line – comma after “agencies”
- Page 2, Paragraph E, first line – insert space between “chief” and “shall”
- Page 2, Paragraph E, second line – insert space between “ratification” and “by”
- Page 2, Paragraph E, last line – comma after “policy”
- Page 2, last paragraph, second line – comma after “suspension”
- Page 2, last paragraph, third line – comma after “if any”
- Page 2, last paragraph, 5th line – comma after “rules”
- Page 3, Section 5, 1st line – “town controlled” should be “town-controlled”
- Page 3, Section 5, 2nd line – change “by” to “for”
- Page 3, Section 5, 3rd line – insert comma after “payments”
- Page 3, Section 5, item a – comma after “repair”
- Page 3, Section 5, item d – comma after “travel”
- Page 3, Section 5, item e – comma after “stipend”
- Page 3, Section 5, item i – comma after “insurance”

Matt Sr. noted no additional comments. Motion made by Richard to close the public hearing. Motion seconded by Jon and passed unanimously.

2. Public Hearing: Consider An Amendments to Section 2-191 of the Town Code Currently Entitled “Veterans Memorial Commission”: Matt O’Brien Sr. called the Public Hearing to order at 7:17 pm.

In attendance were: Julie Blanchard (Zoom), Richard Williams, Lisa Thomas, Matt O’Brien Jr. (Zoom), Matt O’Brien Sr., Lisa Conant (zoom), and Jon Hand (Zoom)

Also in attendance: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Amanda Backhaus, Finance Director (Zoom), Peter DePaola

Matt Sr. read the legal notice: Notice is hereby given that the Coventry Town Council will hold a Hybrid public hearing on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 7:15 P.M. to consider an amendment to Section 2-191 of the Town Code currently entitled: “Veterans Memorial Commission”. The proposed amended Ordinance seeks to expand duties of the Commission to help honor those who served in all recognized wars and conflicts by collaborating with other town agencies and outside groups to assist and facilitate events to recognize veterans including, but not limited to, Memorial Day and Veterans’ Day. The name of the Commission will also be modified to “Veterans Memorial and Events Commission.” The foregoing summary has been provided in lieu of publishing the proposed amended Ordinance in full. This document is prepared for the benefit of the public, solely for the purposes of information, summarization and explanation. This document does not represent the intent of the Town Council of the Town of Coventry for

any purpose. A copy of the complete proposed amended Ordinance is available for inspection on the Town's website, www.coventryct.org.

Matt Sr. noted we had been joined by Peter DePaulo via Zoom. Peter was instrumental in helping to move these recommendations forward and Matt Sr. wanted to acknowledge his efforts for the Town including veterans. Peter has been running the annual Veterans Memorial Race for several years now.

Peter thanked the Council for considering the proposal. He noted there is a whole new generation of veterans in Town and with those at the verge of retiring – he thinks it is a worthy time to recognize our veterans and the history of those who served. He would like to bring together today's Veterans so they can see the resources and activities that are happening in Town. The Commission had been set up with the very narrow focus of monuments, and Peter feels we have many Veteran related activities that the Commission could be involved in organizing.

Lisa T wanted to extend her thanks for this idea – she thinks it is a great idea to have events coordinated for our Veterans and supports the amendments.

Matt Sr. noted no additional comments. Motion by Richard to end the public hearing. Motion seconded by Lisa T and passed unanimously.

3. Regular Town Council Meeting:

4. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Matt O'Brien Sr. at 7:30 pm.

In attendance were: Julie Blanchard (Zoom), Richard Williams, Lisa Thomas, Matt O'Brien Jr. (Zoom), Matt O'Brien Sr., Lisa Conant (zoom), and Jon Hand (Zoom)

Also in attendance: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Amanda Backhaus, Finance Director (Zoom)

5. Pledge of Allegiance: Matt asked for everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

6. Audience of Citizens: Matt read letters submitted by public, including communication from the following: Christina Williams, Wanda Negron, Sandye Simon, Howard Haberen, Richard Martin, Lisa Dunn, Chris Morgan and Jason Blakesley. These statements can be found attached to these minutes.

7. Acceptance of Minutes: August 3, 2020: Lisa Thomas made a motion to accept the minutes of August 3, 2020. The motion was seconded by Richard.

Julie inquired about the resolutions for the public hearing. It was clarified the vote in the meeting was to send the resolutions to Town meeting – but not actually the vote from the Town Meeting. John will double check to make sure the Town meeting minutes clearly outlined who voted for/opposed the resolutions.

The motion to accept the minutes carried on unanimous vote.

Acceptance of Minutes: August 17, 2020: Richard made a motion to accept the minutes of August 17, 2020. The motion was seconded by Jon . The following corrections were requested:

- Item #1 – Jon Hand's first name is misspelled

- Item 8a – 13 lines from the bottom – add the word “of” before “the slide”
- Page 3 – third line up in large paragraph – “will go wrong” should be replaced with “will be fine”
- Page 3 – second paragraph – end of second line – “recently” should be replaced with “recent”
- Item 8C – second to last page – first paragraph 5th line up from the bottom – replace “juts” with “just”
- Item 10 – in both motions for executive session – change “pass” to “passed”
- Item 10 – second executive motion missing who seconded. Amanda will review and update accordingly.
- 1st page – 8th line from the bottom – after Lisa C’s name insert the word “asked”
- 1st page – 4th line from bottom – should read “affordable housing” rather than “affordable” and “low-income housing” rather than “low-income”
- Page 3 – Item 6 – line that starts “Town Clerk” should say “need to mail” rather than “need mail”
- Item F – second paragraph – second line – remove “are”
- Last line – remove “agrees and”

The motion to accept the minutes as amended carried on unanimous vote.

8. Consent Agenda: Motion made Lisa C by to approve the consent agenda. Motion seconded by Jon Hand. Richard notes he wants to remove the 9.F.8 Quarterly Report. Motion passed unanimously.

9. Reports:

A. Council Chair: Julie notes she does not have a report.

B. Council Members: Lisa Thomas noted that at the last Council meeting she had requested that information from CIRMA regarding the Town’s insurance coverage for both the Town and our police department be added to the Council agenda. It was not and she again requests that it be added. Julie apologized for omitting the item. Matt Sr. noted he also had questions regarding costs and perhaps we should add it to Finance. Julie agrees as Finance meets sooner.

Jon Hand noted he wanted to provide some information about the Library’s activity recently. Since July 1 – 880 curbside orders, 281 visitors, 812 reference questions, 5,402 computer/wifi sessions. 6,021 items circulated (including 1,123 electronic items), 36 new card holders, 48 virtual programs with 536 attendees, 96 original social media posts with over 13,000 engagements and 1,172 interactions. He notes the Library is very busy and people are still actively using it during Covid times.

C. Steering Committee: Matthew O’Brien Jr, Chairperson: Matt Jr. noted Steering met August 24. They have tabled reviewing the policy on Council/staff interaction – this can be reviewed at a later date if needed. There was also discussion about police review boards. CRCOG is evaluating a regional review board. There was also discussion about the review board’s charge and what costs might be associated with such a board. There are cost and benefits to each model and these need to be considered. Our attorneys will be joining

Steering on September 28 to discuss. If anyone has questions they would like submitted prior to please submit them to Amanda by Monday September 21. We discussed having a Community Conversation around inclusion and racism. There was discussion about finding funding from local foundations to facilitate this. Marr Sr. requested the information about the different review boards be distributed to the full Council.

C.1 Reappointment: Inland Wetlands Agency: Matt Jr. made a motion to reappoint Thomas Woolf to the Inland Wetlands Committee with a new term to end 9/15/2023. Motion seconded by Jon. Matt Sr. asked if there were any other nominations. Matt Jr. noted this was Steering's recommendation and another vacancy on this committee is still available. Motion passes unanimously.

D. Finance Committee: On consent agenda.

E. COVRRRA: John wanted to let people know the Town will offer another Shred it Day – September 26, 2020 from 9 am to noon at the public works garage. Each person can bring two bags or boxes.

We are also trying to get clearance from FEMA to move forward with debris removal for the storm debris.

Matt Sr. wanted to note the STEAP grant that we are applying for relating to COVRRRA. He requested a breakout of costs related to this so that it is clear what is COVRRRA related work and what is additional.

F. Town Manager: John Elsesser:

9.F.1. Projects Update: John noted his project memo was attached to the agenda. He noted the Town did submit an application to STEAP and the full application was submitted to the Council. We do not know how fast we will hear back on grant awards.

John noted lake treatments in both lakes have been completed – both the hydrilla for Coventry Lake and the fanwort in Eagleville.

In the agenda packet we have the approval for the LOTCIP grant for the South Street project which is approximately \$3 million dollars.

Coventry Grammar School parking lot had some issues the first few days of school due to the excessive number of parents dropping off their students. The number of families doing drop off have doubled. He thinks this will settle down once school has been in session and there have been some adjustments to the original parking lot plan to accommodate.

John noted a volunteer in the area has volunteered to repaint both memorial canons for us free of charge as long as we buy materials. The Chairman of the Committee met with the volunteer Saturday to go over the plan. He noted the wheels on the large canon are starting to fail again and we will need to consider fixing them at some point during the year.

Lisa T. noted the meeting is not streaming on YouTube. John noted we recently replaced the equipment. It had been working when we tested it but we will go back to the vendor and make sure everything is all set to stream properly for the next meeting.

John noted an exciting project coming to Town this week – PBS will be filming a show called Legacy List featuring Stone Walls which is the name of the home where David Hayes lived in and where the family has set up a foundation to display his statues.

John noted a group has requested a political rally in front of the Town Hall. John notes he has denied that and we have never had a political rally in front of the Town Hall. He has offered the group the same concept that was offered to Black Lives Matters – including parking at the Town Hall, marching down Main Street and utilizing Patriots Park. Our Police Chief is trying to work with this group.

Jon Hand noted WTP in the project memo refers to the Waste Water Treatment Plant and that it should be WWTP not WTP.

9.F.2. COVID 19 Update: John said we have been getting some complaints about businesses that are not enforcing mask orders. The Health District will be involved with food businesses. He notes we are doing well as a community and need to continue being diligent about wearing masks. Matt Sr. noted for the record that the Council room has been spaced for social distancing and as such, certain Council members were not wearing masks. Lisa C said she noted in the reports from the Health District that there has been a recent jump in cases which can be attributed to UCONN and Eastern reopening.

9.F.3. Microgrid Update: John noted we formally received this afternoon our 90-day extension request from PURA. Meanwhile, there is an energy bill that is being worked on by Senator Ackert to attempt to assist us – as it would obviously be easier if there was a law rather than going through the PURA process. The microgrid team has finished their revisions to the initial design and submitted the plans to DEEP. We have received the rate structures for Orchard Hills which shows significant savings. Matt Sr. requested we get as much lead time as possible on any rate information so that there was adequate time to review.

9.F.4 Staff Recommended LOTCIP Projects for Funding: The staff referenced here is the CRCOG Transportation Committee which serves as the acting Board of Directors in the summer months – which means this list is basically final and we have been awarded the money for South St.

9.F.5 Summary: August 11, 2020 Primaries: John noted that Dorothy Grady wrote this up regarding the primaries as an informational piece for the Council.

9.F.6 Auditor's Communication with Those Charged with Governance: John notes this is the annual letter from our auditors which basically details their audit – the scope, timing and who has what responsibilities. John reminded them that if the Council knows about anything or has specific concerns to please let the auditors know. It also outlines what they do and do not do procedurally.

9.F.8 Quarterly Report: Richard noted he had asked for this item to be removed and had a comment – he thinks it is amazing how much is going on in each department and how busy town staff are. John noted he is amazed how much staff can get done. He noted at the next meeting the Council would get to meet our new Human Services Director who they have not yet had a chance to meet. She will come to discuss several new initiatives and the potential reopening of the Senior Center.

10. Unfinished Business:

10.A 19/20-69: Consideration/Possible Action: Amendment to Charge, Veterans Memorial Commission: Matt Sr. noted we had the public hearing earlier and outlined proposed changes. Motion to approve the Amendments to Charge, Veterans Memorial Commission, as amended at the public hearing, was made by Julie. Motion seconded by Matt Jr. and passed unanimously.

10.B 20/21-17: Consideration/Possible Action: Proposed Ordinance Changes for Creation of Coventry Fire/EMS Department 18: Matt Sr. noted we had the public hearing earlier on this as well. Motion to approve the Proposed Ordinance Changes for Creation of Coventry Fire/EMS Department 18, as amended at the public hearing, was made by Lisa T. Motion seconded by Jon Had and passed unanimously.

10.C 20-21-18 Consideration/Possible Action: Modifications to the Public Gathering Ordinance 70-88: Matt Sr. notes this item is not ready for action and will carry it to the next meeting.

10.D 20/21-21: Response to Citizen Concern: Constitutionality of Canceling Referendum: Matt Sr. noted John provided a large amount of information to the individual who requested it and are working on three questions to send to the attorneys. John noted he emailed out on Friday the original questions and Matt Sr's proposed changes, which help make the questions more clear. John notes the third question becomes moot based on the answer to the other questions and he recommends removing it. Questions: Does the Governor's emergency powers allow him to set aside the home rule section of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut and supersede the related sections of our Town Charter? Did our decisions regarding the budget process violate the Connecticut Constitution in any way? After research, the third question was identified as: Is anything unique about Coventry and our Charter that other Towns are not experiencing or dealing with in which we would be breaking our own law by following the Governor's executive orders? John noted he feels this question is already answered in the first two questions. Matt Jr. indicated he would like the third question included – as we have budget voting requirements that not all Towns have. Agreement to sent all three questions to the Town's attorney. Jon Hand noted that we should start to track the costs associated with this issue to see what it is costing the Town. John Elsesser noted it has been only staff time thus far but it has been a considerable amount. It was noted this can be assessed once we receive the legal bill relating to these questions.

10.E 20/21-22 Consideration/Possible Action: Extension of Vintech Ambulance Staffing to 24/7 Operation: Matt Sr. noted he attended the LECC meeting and all parties highly advocated to continue the 24/7 ambulance coverage. Matt notes he would like to move this to Finance for further review of the financial implications.

11. New Business:

12. Executive Session: John Elsesser noted that he is not yet ready to discuss the open labor contracts and executive session is not necessary.

13. Adjournment: Motion made by Richard to adjourn at 8:59 pm. Motion seconded by Lisa T. and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A.L.B.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Amanda L. Backhaus, CPA
Finance Director

These minutes are draft until approved at a subsequent Town Council Committee meeting

Amanda Backhaus

From: Williams, Christina PW <christina.williams@prattwhitney.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 12:18 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thank you

My name is Christina Williams 436 Ripley Hill Rd. I wanted to thank the town council and the town of Coventry for their response to the recent storm. Last Tuesday the storm broke several large limbs off trees lining the street in my front yard. These 25 ft limbs only partially fell , creating a very dangerous situation. I called public works requesting help getting the limbs down, they couldn't be seen from the street as they faced our house. As soon as roads were clear, and power restored, 7 am they were in my front yard removing the affected trees completely. While, I personally was without power for 5 days, it was apparent the town was doing everything possible to unblock roads and aid in power restoration. Thank you for working around the clock and thank you for helping alleviate a very dangerous situation.

Thank you,

Chrissy

Christina Williams
Military Engines, CDS
(860)830-5733

Amanda Backhaus

From: Wanda Negron <wandamnegron1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 3:52 PM
To: Coventry Audience; Jon Hand; Matthew OBrien; Matthew O'brien Jr.; Lisa Conant; Lisa Thomas; Julie Blanchard
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request for Change

Dear members of the Town Council:

I am saddened that we, as town people, have had to endure yet another public spectacle for the last 10 months in Coventry. It is even sadder that this is not the first time this has happened in our small town. For the last 10 months, we have learned of yet another case when one of our children have been victimized by someone that should have the public trust. Further, we have witnessed, what I feel, has been the incompetent handling of Mr. Hick's case by our Chief of Police and Town Manager.

In my opinion, there has been a severe breach of trust that needs to be rectified. One of the most important and sacred duties our police and town leaders have is the safety of our children. Recent events have shown that this has not been a priority and in fact has been neglected by our Chief of Police since 2012, as we learned from the internal investigation report.

For the last 10 months, we, the residents of Coventry, have waited for a resolution to the disturbing allegations against Mr. Hicks. To learn that our town leaders tried to keep the findings of the internal investigation report private in the interest of fairness to Mr. Hicks (because he didn't get to speak his side of the story since he resigned) is disappointing and further evidence that we need new town leadership. Finding out that Chief Palmer could have stepped in as far back as 2012 if he had investigated a resident's complaint on behalf of her minor daughter, is the most damning evidence of Chief Palmer's incompetence. Sweeping evidence under the rug is not only dereliction of his duty to the residents of this town but it also allowed Mr. Hicks to continue his abhorrent behavior for many years. The fact that Chief Palmer stood by and did nothing in 2012, which allowed Mr. Hicks to continue to target our most vulnerable population, our children, is intolerable. I thought I couldn't be more horrified of Mr. Hicks behavior than I have been for the last 10 months. Instead, the additional misconduct details that were uncovered by the internal investigation report really bring to light the need for new police and town leadership.

At the very least, I urge you to cast a vote of no confidence for Chief Palmer. While I know that it's in the Town Manager's purview to hire/fire the Chief of Police, I believe the Town Council, as elected officials and representatives of the Town of Coventry residents have a duty to reproach Chief Palmer's dereliction of duty and incompetence in the handling of not only the investigation in the last year, but also as far back as 2012. As a resident, I have no confidence in either Chief Palmer or the Town Manager.

I truly hope you feel as the rest of the town surely does. We must protect our children at any cost. We must ensure the public trust is restored. We must take action to ensure we have zero tolerance for misconduct in the police department. We must ensure our town leadership acts in the best interest of the Town of Coventry and not in their own best interest. I urge you to do the right thing.

Regards,

Wanda Negron
Resident
203 Eastview Drive

Coventry Audience of Citizens
Submitted BY:
Sandye Simon
425 Geraldine Drive

8/12/2020

Good Evening, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the amazing people who I had the pleasure of working with during the primary at Coventry High School on August 11th. It was a breath of fresh air to work together as both Republicans and Democrats to man the polls. A special thank you to Dorothy Grady who worked so hard to ensure that voting during this pandemic was done safely and efficiently. I can't even begin to tell you the number of people who thanked us, from both parties.

It was very frustrating for me to come off of this wonderful experience to hear that Mr. Obrien Jr. was with one of his friends, who is not a Coventry Resident, on a megaphone on the corner of Main St and Grant Hill, swearing and degrading "Liberal Women". I am sorry that they feel threatened by intelligent women who may have different views from their own. I do believe in freedom of speech, however, having someone swearing on a megaphone which can be heard by our children is disgraceful. It is behavior that should not be brought into our amazing community. Supporting your candidate of choice should be done in a civil manner without the need to degrade others. I hope as we go into the November Election, we all remember that after the November election, we will still be, Neighbors, Friends, and Relatives. As a community member I hope that we can support our candidates without degrading each other.

Thank You, Sandye Simon

Amanda Backhaus

From: Howard Haberern <hhhman99@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2020 6:41 AM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] please read at the next Audience of Citizens

I would like to commend our Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Petrone, for all his hard work with many of our community members on our school opening plans. There is no question that Dr. Petrone's approach that balances school academics and the community's health and safety will produce excellent results in the long run. Truly, Dr. Petrone is a dedicated professional who deeply cares about the welfare of our students and the success of our school system.

I do question the actions of Republican Board of Education member, Christine Williams. Once again, she has confirmed her lack of fitness as an elected town official by her rude and less than respectful manner in which she addressed the superintendent at the last BOE meeting. It clearly appears that her own self-interest in opening the schools full time took precedence over the needs and safety of all our students and families. We need officials that represent everyone not just themselves.

I suspect that she wants the school system to take the burden from her having to care for her four children and to eliminate her childcare expenses.

The Coventry school system has excelled under Dr. Petrone's leadership and hopefully he will understand that she **does not** represent the average Coventry parent or citizen and he will continue to be our superintendent of schools.

Howard Haberern
80 Cassidy Hill Road
Coventry

Amanda Backhaus

From: RICHARD MARTIN <rfmartin65@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 25, 2020 11:49 AM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Praise for School Superintendent

I am writing this email to praise Dr. Petrone and his professional staff on a job well done on the re-opening of the Coventry school system. I watched the BOE meeting of 8/13 and was totally impressed by the presentation and professionalism of Dr. Petrone and his concern for all the students in Coventry schools.. I wish I could say that for all the members of the Board of Education. The actions and words of Board member Christina Williams were shameful, beyond common decency and unbecoming an elected official. It was so obvious from the beginning by her actions and words that she opposed the hybrid plan because it was an inconvenience to her. She cannot hide from the fact that her words and actions showed that she could care less for the student population in Coventry. Her only concern was to have students in school 5 days a week regardless of any safety and health issues involved, almost as if the virus was a hoax and it would not affect children. Her vile attack on the needs of the children in Special Ed is particularly disturbing. She feels that the special needs children have an advantage over her children because they will be going to school 4 days a week and that puts her children at a disadvantage. I dare her to speak to a parent of a special needs child and see if they feel their child has an advantage. Her words and actions show how unfit she is to hold public office. Citizens once elected to public office have an obligation to serve all the citizens ,again by her words and actions she has shown that she only cares for her own children and not the children of Coventry.

To Dr. Petrone I would like to say that as a community Coventry is fortunate to have you as our Superintendent and we can be proud of the progress that the school system has made under your leadership. These are difficult times for all of us but under your leadership a plan has been devised that keeps the safety of the children, professional staff and workers as safe as possible.

Rick Martin
195 Northfield Rd.

Amanda Backhaus

From: Lisa Dunn <lkendall2002@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 25, 2020 4:38 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] For Board of Education Meeting 8/26/20

I want to express concern with behavior and comments I saw and heard during the last BOE meeting from Christina Williams. I was particularly concerned with comments she made regarding students in the special education program who will attend in-person school 4 days per week.

My daughter is part of the special education program. What is equitable for her is NOT the same as what is equitable for a typical peer. There is simply no comparison and testing other children to determine if they can participate in the special education program is quite frankly insulting. I can only guess that the criteria for selecting the most needy 15-20 students involved testing already done that assesses a child's ability to complete timed, age-appropriate tasks.

As a reminder, attending 4 days of school in-person in the hybrid model means students will get repetition (e.g., same instruction on Monday and Tuesday). Repetition is necessary for my daughter and I can tell you that two days of repeated lessons will STILL not stick.

I know these are difficult discussions and whatever decision the district makes will never have full support, but I would have hoped for more respect and understanding given the situation. We all want our children to succeed academically but not without sacrificing safety. I thank Dr. Petrone, Dr. Giller and all of the staff involved for putting together a comprehensive plan that helps me feel comfortable that appropriate safety precautions will be in place for our children.

Sincerely,

Lisa Dunn
436 Hop River Rd.
Coventry, CT 06238

Amanda Backhaus

From: Chris Morgan <echomirage13@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 30, 2020 11:48 PM
To: Jon Hand; Julie Blanchard; Lisa Conant; Lisa Thomas; Richard Williams Jr.; Matthew O'Brien Jr.; Matthew O'Brien; Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Budget process

Members of council,

I would like to thank councilperson Williams for again bringing forward the issue of the councils action surrounding the budget, and this time pushing to have some meaningful discussion. While I disagree with his position that the council "did the right thing" I am quite happy to see that the due diligence that should have been done 4 to 5 months ago will finally be carried out.

There are however A few things that need to be recognized from the discussion that the council carried out on the subject. First and foremost, this notion that is repeated in varied forms by many members of the council during the discussion, that there is legal opinion that says the council has the authority to abandon the constitution. As I have been very clear about in my previous statements there is no record of this that has been presented except the interaction between the Town Manager and the attorney on March 22nd which is quite clearly not a pertinent opinion as it relates to Coventry, nor does it even approach any question of the constitutionality. At the August 17th meeting Mr. Elsesser alludes to other communications that he had that gave more clear direction on this and "facts" (video at roughly 2:28) that support his opinion that the council could abandon the constitution and the charter. If Those communications exist he did not provide them when initially requested to do so, and as the council members have seen i have since requested again twice now for this information. As of writing of this statement these items are yet to be produced.

Members of council also reference these "facts" and "legal opinions" but not a single member who raises these points sites any actual statement of fact or any actual source supporting their claim. Councilperson O'Brien Sr. Speaks at length of doing the right thing based on indepth communications with the attorney, but again, this does not appear to have happened, and there is no source to support these claims. He brings up that the attorney didn't say not to take these actions, and again speaks of facts while presenting none. The part of this that seems left out; if you don't ask the attorney those questions you don't get answers, and asking those questions is exactly what doing "due diligence " is and that is what the council had a responsibility to do before taking action. He also mentions the idea that had been no legal challenge to this. This is also not true, in previous enters I have mentioned "Murphy Et Al vs Lamont" which is an ongoing challenge. Town Leaders in Bethel filed a complaint on this exact aspect of the executive orser with the federal Department of Justice, and of course Cromwell made a unanimous decision to ignore the executive orders issued by Governor Lamont and did not face reprisal recognizing that any towns government foremost responsibility is to the people they represent, not to the governor.

The Town Manager continues on explaining how there is no precedent to go on. A; he didn't ask, and B; this is akin to admission that he did not have the applicable information. He also states that in my letters "the facts are not sound...." yet as seems to be the running theme, he cannot offer any facts or evidence to refute them. It should be noted that Section 8-8 H is absolutely applicable because while it has to do with expenditures it is clear that those expenditures are illegal if outside the processes laid out in the charter. In the other subsections covered in section 8-8 it explains the process for spending and specifically spending outside of budgeted expenses. The council had no right to adopt a budget, therefore any spending done under the guise of the illegal budget is inappropriate by the charter and must be held to account accordingly whether John wants to face that or not.

Councilperson O'Brien Sr. Brings up the idea that the council should inquire whether or not the executive order can suspend homerule. This is the question that should have been addressed in April or any other time

before the council took action. it was the responsibility of the council, and Councilperson OBrien Sr. Is by this statement acknowledging that the council does not know this information.

I could continue at length pointing out the councils attempts at deflection on this subject. I presented clear facts with sources, No one on this Council has been able to refute or offer any rebuttal to them. I am however hopeful that there will be some answers now that the council has taken up the work it should have done already.

Voting is a very important part of the structure of our governmental system. When we step into the ballot box the lowest of paupers vote carries as much weight as that of the Richest of moguls and it is the point where we agree to make consensus. It is with good reason that this is a right of the people.

Lastly however I think it is necessary to address Councilperson Thomas statement about my political philosophy on taxation and its relationship to my statements about the budget. This of course is nothing more than a poorly presented but classic strawman argument. My opinions and ideology being different absolutely do not in any way preclude my ability to be objective on a topic. Rebut the argument with facts, don't seek to deflect the subject by beating the strawman. I question if Councilperson Thomas would likely feel the same if in the councils discussion her statments about other council members being "white nationalists" prior to her election were used to discount her opinions at the table. Logical fallacy is a poor practice.

When I state things like "taxation is theft" the philosophy behind that is in accordance with the Non-agression principle (NAP) and the acknowledgement that compulsory collection of money from people involves the direct use of force while there is no real ability to consent (or not) to be part of a society. This does not mean that there is no regard for the fact that we have built our system of government to be deeply tied to taxing, and that the government needs to collect money in order to operate. It is however the acknowledgement that it is better to do things without that use of force whenever possible, an acknowledgement that society can and has accomplished alot through vountary human action, and the acknowledgement that good ideas dont require force. Why would anyone not aspire to a society where people could live without being forced or threatened with violence? And if it can not immediately happen, which of course is the case, why would we not aspire to move closer to a non coercive vountary society where ever possible? Its really quite a simple philosophy to say "don't hurt people and don't steal their stuff".

I realize that the statement is made as a statement of fact, but it is woefully uninformed. If anyone would like to have discussion of political philosophy I am always open and willing to discuss, its actually something that I greatly enjoy and feel makes us better in how we operate politically. But perhaps we should seek to avoid discounting peoples opinions by assigning context to their person that we don't know about or didn't take the time to understand.

In Liberty
Chris Morgan
62 North Ayers Rd

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

Amanda Backhaus

From: Jason Blakesley <jasonblakesley@live.com>
Sent: Monday, August 31, 2020 2:19 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] audience of citizens

Hi. My name is Jason Blakesley, and I live at 27 Berry Avenue.

"Reefer makes darkies think they're as good as white men." These are the words of Harry Anslinger, commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, who fought to garner support for the prohibition of marijuana through the 1930s. He was the lead architect to the prohibition of cannabis and hemp.

Unfortunately, this type of language is still being used in our country. It's happening right here in Coventry. Sometime in 2020, the owners of the hemp farm experienced racism when someone sprayed racist graffiti on a car they own. The car, left vandalized, is now parked in front of the beautiful mural on the back of their barn on South Street. Next to the car is a sign that reads *Racism Ruins Lives*.

I want to show my support for the owners for the hemp farm in Coventry. The mural depicts hemp leaves and includes images of the American and Puerto Rican flags, and is a statement piece. I think it is important that we know the history of the prohibition of hemp and cannabis. Rooted in racism, these racist laws still disproportionately oppress black men and men of color to this day. It's about time we start talking about its history.

In line with oppressive laws, felons are banned from growing hemp for ten years at the federal level, and in CT, legislators enacted even harsher restrictions by including a lifetime ban for felons from growing hemp. Connecticut is so progressive! This brings me to a very important question constituents will want to know. Do the democratic candidates for the CT General Assembly, Lisa Thomas and Brenda Falusi, support legalizing cannabis for recreational use in CT?

Interestingly, there was a time in this country when hemp and cannabis were legal. In fact, in 1619, it was illegal not to grow hemp in Jamestown, Virginia. CT and Massachusetts had similar laws that mandated farmers to grow hemp as a staple crop. Several of the early presidents of the United States all grew hemp. Many were also advocating for commercial hemp production. Hemp was widely used during the nation's early years; examples include hemp paper used to draft the Declaration of Independence. cloth such as the first American flag in 1776, and hemp oil like Abe Lincoln would have used to light his lights.

It is ironic that the first American flag that represented freedom and liberty was made from hemp, yet over 150 years later hemp would be made illegal in order to oppress black people and people of color. It is no wonder that many athletes choose to kneel during the national anthem to draw attention to social injustice and police brutality.

Before members of the community complain about the artwork, they should take the time to research the deep seeded racist roots in which hemp and cannabis prohibition lie.

Jason Blakesley
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