Staff Meeting Minutes  
January 8, 2020

Present: Wendy Rubin, Mark Kiefer, Amanda Backhaus, Kevin Roberto, Lori Tollmann, Margaret Kahn, Linda Greenbacker, Eric Trott, John Elsesser, Laura Stone

Town Council Meeting Highlights – John Elsesser:

- Minutes of the meeting available separately.
- During Audience of Citizens requests are still being made for an apology from the incident at the Board of Education regarding the selection of officers at the swearing-in ceremony, and subsequent online communications. The Council Chair requested that this be discontinued and that Audience of Citizens be focused on items relating to the agenda. Citizens disagreed. Reporters are requesting Council rules of procedure regarding the nature of Audience of Citizens.
- Appointments and reappointments were made to a variety of Boards and Commissions. Action on a candidate for Inland Wetlands was tabled until she can meet with the Steering Committee.
- The new Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee has a quorum so an initial meeting can be scheduled.
- A CDBG grant application is due soon. We anticipate some form of Orchard Hills grant that we didn’t get last time.
- A joint Board of Education and Council meeting on the microgrid project and joint meeting of their finance/fiscal committees for presentation of the audit and quarterly updates will take place next Monday 1/13.
- Results of Human Services holiday programs were shared: Orchard Hills: 61 Thanksgiving and 67 Christmas meals. The department helped 57 families town wide for Thanksgiving and 63 for Christmas. Bell ringing generated $4,384.35. Bell ringing revenues are down for several reasons, including reduced availability at sites and lack of volunteers.
- Red Cross is helping the family from the recent fire on Main Street including funeral expenses for resident who died.
- Project highlights: The Northfields contractor has not stopped work because temperatures are mild. It would be good if they finish so we are ready for spring construction.
- CRCOG 2020 legislative goals were shared.
- Go Banking has rated Coventry as Connecticut’s top pick in their “Best City in Every State to Buy a House” report.
- The Council Chair has asked to participate in our staff meetings. She will attend or be patched in via speaker phone. This will start at the next meeting.
- Council goals were fine-tuned and approved at the meeting. John will coordinate the last round of edits into one document. Some items will need clarification for staff initiatives and budget implications. Some consultation/study may be required.
- Revaluation will complicate the upcoming budget acceptance and conversation.
- The Fire Transition Study Committee will present recommendations at the next Council meeting. Chief Palmer will also give a presentation about a grant for holding cell rape prevention.
- The Council adopted a resolution to support two of four CRCOG initiatives for RPIP (regional incentive) programs. One is to participate in joint town/BOE finance software. Two of the initiatives did not apply to us.
- The trash contract is up for renewal. Some decisions will be needed. The price will go up or service reductions will be needed.
Agency Updates:

Booth & Dimock Library – Margaret Kahn:
- Margaret introduced Christa Kiedaisch, the new children’s librarian, who started Monday. Christa has an MLS from Kent State University. Christa said she is excited to get started.
- One of our full time staff members just dropped to part time. We are hiring for another position, which may be an adult services librarian, to start the beginning of February.
- We are moving over to Bibliomation for our online catalog. This is a huge benefit to the library. It is nationally supported with strong Connecticut representation. It will strengthen our lending library. The conversion will require significant efforts for bar re-coding. A re-coding event is pending.
- Story Time is up and running again.
- Margaret and Kayla are attending the Library Consortium meeting next week.
- We are working with CT Historic Preservation Trust to fix joist issues in the front of the library.
- We submitted a letter of interest for a 1772 grant.

Town Clerk – Lori Tollmann:
- Lori and Karen went to Town Clerks’ School in December.
- Lori attended the Clerk Executive Board meeting.
- Our office was given project a to promote the 100-year anniversary of women’s suffrage. We have a few ideas but others are welcome. We are looking to do year-long initiative.

Tax Office – Linda Greenbacker:
- During the month of December, we sent 114 delinquent sewer notices, 145 general back tax statements, and the printer mailed 171 supplemental motor vehicle bills and the January installment of real estate.
- The tax sale scheduled for 1/14 will continue with one property instead of two. The title search performed on the Brewster St. property was done incorrectly so the lot number on the legal notice was incorrect. We will hold another sale later in the spring when the notice can be properly warned.

Police Department – Kevin Roberto:
- Jeff Spadjinske left for the FBI National Academy last week. He will be gone for 10 weeks. Olivia is out on light duty for maternity leave.
- The State reaccreditation process is pending. February will be last of the 4-year file reviews and a site visit will take place in April.

Land Use/Development & Building Office – Eric Trott:
*Reporting for Joe Callahan, Building Official:*
- Cumberland Farms is under construction. We are getting some complaint calls but staff is monitoring and we are managing to avoid disruptions. Septic and footings for the building will go in over the next two weeks, weather permitting. They are looking at an April/May opening.

*Land Use/Development:*
- PZC is wrapping up the Plan of Conservation & Development with a final visioning session on Monday. There will be a public hearing toward the end of February/early March.
- Caprilands probate issues continue. The architect is working on assessment of the buildings with a report anticipated in March. We are working on an RFP to seek new adaptive reuse.
- There will be a meeting to discuss the regional economic development plan next week and we are hoping to complete in the next 60 days.
• Tim Liptrap is doing a Facebook for Business workshop series starting this month. It is an intensive 12-week program in conjunction with Nichols College, and is a unique opportunity for businesses to learn and use best practices in social media. Eight local businesses are participating.
• Joshua’s Trust is proceeding with the purchase of a property on the corner of Flanders and Flanders River Road. We will partner with them to do some site clean-up.

Public Works – Mark Kiefer:
• We had snow last night. We are about 40% into our overtime budget as of now. Small storms still require application – and each one is about $6k for salt. Unless the jet stream changes, we are anticipating a bad year for snow.
• We had a conference call with Cargill today regarding the well contamination issue – we are hoping to rule out that material. CT DEEP is involved with 3 wells in town to investigate the cause of contamination.
• We are still hoping to get the new irrigation tank at Richardson and test pits at Laidlaw to utilize the bathroom trailer.
• We are waiting to receive our new roadside mower, and planning to get rocks and stumps removed to increase productivity with roadside mowing.
• Trees are a major issue. We will be asking for additional operating and capital funds as well as some State tree removal funds. We anticipate that ash and oak trees will continue to be a major problem in the right of way.
• The company working on phase 1 of the Northfields project has agreed to hold their price for phases 2 and 3. If we are over the threshold for prevailing wage, we may have to pull some catch basins out of the project and use another firm or the town crew to do that work.
• We are working with available funds to plan summer road work.
• The Energy Committee doesn’t have a quorum. They are continuing to meet but it is not productive because they can’t make decisions.

Finance Office – Amanda Backhaus:
• Healthcare open enrollment for the Police and Public Works departments is complete.
• We are compiling the capital budget and will be scheduling department meetings soon. We have submissions for all but one of the operating budgets.
• The audit was received in December. There was one comment regarding Board of Education encumbrances. Staff should be aware of purchase order update procedures – a memo will be sent.

Parks & Recreation – Wendy Rubin:
• The winter brochure is out. There are some new items including a calendar chart that we think has helped to increase enrollment. The yoga classes have doubled in size. We are starting a Stop the Bleed class, and an April vacation program that will include Minecraft, Legos, etc.
• We are meeting with the Community Gardens group to get ready for spring.
• We had some facility issues – the community center floor has been replaced, with vinyl plank installation set for next week. The Millbrook Place condenser unit was damaged by an ice fall from the roof. We had to shift gears for several events that were scheduled. The new unit should be installed in about a week.
• We are getting ready to begin planning for the upcoming beach season – we are looking at budget implications and staffing due to minimum wage increases. Wendy is going to a Parks & Recreation Directors’ workshop on this topic in a couple of weeks.
• We are choosing a new name for the Valentine’s dance, as “Father-Daughter” does not encompass all of the relationships involved for the participants.
Administration – Laura Stone:
- Laura is a member of the CoventryVision Committee, which filmed a year in the Community Gardens during the 2019 season. Final edits to the footage are wrapping up and we hope to debut the video in time to promote the start-up of the 2020 season. Perhaps it could be aired at the first planning meeting for the Community Gardens group.
- The winter newsletter will be out later than usual due to delayed submission of content. We are hoping it will be in homes by the end of the month.
- Laura is also working on the annual report for FY 18/19, and content for the quarterly report for October-December 2019 is due this month.

Town Manager – John Elsesser:
- A public hearing will be held on January 21 for two ordinances: amendments to correct a typographical error in a Parks & Recreation ordinance, and repeal of the ordinance related to the use of oil or natural gas from extraction activities due to a statewide regulation that supersedes our local one.
- Cumberland Farms is starting to think about their opening, and they usually do a fundraiser toward a local group as part of their entry into the community. They are seeking suggestions from our office. If you have suggestions, send them to John and he will forward a couple of them.

Human Services – Courtney Chan:
- The Orchard Hills Thanksgiving deliveries were supported by Sneha’s mentoring group, and Town staff helped with the Christmas deliveries. Thanks to both groups.
- We have processed 71 Access energy applications.
- Trainings are coming up on topics such suicide, etc.
- We have five active Juvenile Review Board cases which is a lot for one staff person, plus there is a new State mandate that requires our Youth Services office to deal with truancy cases. We are trying to investigate what other communities are doing - some are seeking grants for additional personnel.
- The Food Bank crew was big help over the holidays. They are eager to get back into the storage room at the Community Center once the floor is complete. We will be doing a plea for certain foods.
- Senior Center programs are going strong. Catherine Alfaro started in December as the new assistant. She is working on programming, getting familiar with the My Senior Center application, meeting people, etc.