Minutes
Town Council Steering Committee Meeting
November 25, 2019
Town Hall Conference Room B

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

2. Acceptance of Minutes:
   Jonathan Hand moved to accept the minutes of the Steering Committee meeting on October 28, 2019. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

3. Reports:
   Committee Chair: no report.
   Committee members: no reports.

4. Review/Recommendations/Vacancies, Boards & Commissions Reports:
   John Elsesser gave an overview of the monthly reports. He said there are often frustrating items as a result of software limitations. Some items cannot be adjusted in the way we would prefer.

   The Expiration report shows upcoming term expirations. The Town Clerk’s office sends a reminder to these individuals about a month prior to the end of their terms. Requests to be reappointed are submitted through their office and forwarded to Steering for action.

   The Vacancy report shows actual vacancies. We are going to have some seats removed that are not relevant because the appointments are not made by the Town Council. The Insurance Advisory and Personnel Appeals Board will be discussed tonight. The Special Constable should come off. Norm Miekle quit and we still have two constables remaining, John Dittrich for marine patrol and John Chipman for animal control. Julie Blanchard said she would find it interesting to know the date that Matt Twerdy began serving on the WPCA. She feels like he has been on it as long as there has been one. It is not an issue; she is just curious. She is also interested in getting new people onto committees if long-term people no longer want to serve.

   The Board & Commissions report is the full list of committees. It gives some information about the number of members on the board, who is filling what seat, what their terms are, and political party affiliations. John said we have to be careful about minority representation, even if there is a qualified person interested in joining. If there is a question you can ask him, and he will check with staff. Sometimes there are attendance issues and it might be appropriate for a member who cannot attend meetings to resign. It has also been Steering’s past practice to invite candidates for major land use boards in for an interview (Planning and Zoning Commission, Inland Wetlands, Economic Development).

5. Reappointments:
   A. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the reappointment of Lorraine Lynch to the Coventry Housing Authority, term to expire 11/30/2024. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

   B. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the reappointment of Richard Brand to the Water Pollution Control Authority, term to expire 11/7/2021. The motion was seconded by Julie
Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote. John Elsesser noted that Mr. Brand is well-qualified, as he is a retired plant operator from UConn.

C. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the reappointment of Matthew Twerdy to the Water Pollution Control Authority, term to expire 11/7/2021. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote. Julie said she appreciates Mr. Twerdy’s long-term dedication. John Elsesser noted that Mr. Twerdy is an environmental engineer and registered sanitarian.

D. Jonathan Hand made a motion to add consideration of the reappointment of Albert Bradley to the HUD Housing Rehab/Fair Housing and Human Rights Commissions to the agenda. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the appointment of Albert Bradley to the HUD Housing Rehab/Fair Housing Commission, term to expire 12/31/2021. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

E. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the appointment of Albert Bradley to the Human Rights Commission, term to expire 12/31/2022. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

6. Appointments:
   A. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the appointment of Rebecca Norman as an alternate on the Inland Wetlands Commission. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard. John Elsesser said at the last Steering Committee meeting we were requested to seek counsel about political party representation for alternates, as there are only two alternates for this commission and other member is also a Democrat. Attorney Rich Roberts investigated and does not think it is appropriate as it would be in conflict with the Charter. Matthew O’Brien, Jr. asked if the Commission has needed the alternates. John replied yes; there have been attendance problems. There are several ways to handle it – we can see if anyone wants to step down or see if there is another commission Ms. Norman might be willing to serve on. Julie Blanchard said she hates to turn down a young person who wants to serve. We could share what other vacancies are available. The Town Manager’s office will see that Ms. Norman is contacted to gauge her interest on other commissions. Jonathan Hand rescinded his motion with regret, seconded by Julie Blanchard.

   B. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the appointment of Aline Hoffman to the Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee for the duration of the committee’s work. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

   C. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the appointment of Valdis Vinkels to the Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee for the duration of the committee’s work. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote. Julie noted that Mr. Vinkels will bring some legal expertise to the group.

7. Consideration/Dissolution of Committees:
   A. Insurance Advisory Committee:
      John Elsesser said that Finance Director Amanda Backhaus has provided a memo regarding the Insurance Advisory Committee. This committee hasn’t been active in a long time, especially over the last five years. The Town has changed the way we do business and we are no longer using an agent broker since we went to CIRMA. Staff levels have also changed. We have a Finance
Director and a full-time School Business Manager now. Matthew O’Brien, Jr. asked if the Finance Director would be able to handle anything that might come up. John Elsesser replied yes, with additional support from CIRMA if needed. The real issue is how much risk do you want to take. We did a risk management audit a few years ago, and it might be a better approach to do that every so often as opposed to someone trying to sell us something. Risks include such things as cyber security, environmental issues, and climate change. John is on the CIRMA Board of Directors and is also on the Financial/Audit Committee. Last year’s audit was good. CIRMA made $24 million and they do an equity distribution to participating towns. The biggest thing they’ve done is to boost their investment income. They have enough money now that they are in the big leagues. They have increased their reinsurance and locked it in for a three-year term. They are pursuing direct underwriting with Lloyd’s of London. The number of training courses they offer is also top notch – such as leadership training for fire departments. They also provide loss control and claims management for other towns. **Jonathan Hand moved to recommend that the Town Council dissolve the Insurance Advisory Committee.** The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien, Jr. and carried on unanimous vote.

**B. Personnel Appeals Board:**
John Elsesser said that our labor attorney has pointed out that this committee is now inappropriate, as the Town Council is the body for personnel appeals as a result of the adoption of the amended Personnel Rules and Policies document. **Jonathan Hand moved to direct the Town Clerk to notify any remaining members of the Personnel Appeals Board that committee has been dissolved as a result of adoption of the amended personnel rules document, and to remove this committee from the monthly report.** The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien, Jr. and carried on unanimous vote.

8. **Policy for Town Council interaction with Town staff:**
Julie Blanchard asked for this item to be on tonight’s agenda. She said we received two versions of the same document from 2006, so the intended update from 2018 was provided in the committee member folders tonight. Julie wants to look at this directive, and perhaps tone it down a little. She always felt it was more of a suggestion rather than set in stone. The current Council ran for office on issues of transparency, and we want people to be able to ask questions. Jonathan Hand said this directive was not voted on; it has been the prerogative of the Council Chair. His reading of either of these documents was that it was not to make it hard to get information, but to get information correctly. It is not fair for people to go directly to staff with tasks. John Elsesser is always the best person to start with when there is a question or request. Julie said she would like more time to think about this and asked for other people’s thoughts. John Elsesser said there are times when we can easily handle a simple question, and in those cases this directive is too bureaucratic. However, if it requires research or study then it can become problematic with priorities, staff time management, etc. Some of this arose from concerns about direct contact to the Board of Education. It is also good for Council members to know the staff. Jonathan said he would like to be sure that if one Council member gets information, that it be shared. If someone shows up at a meeting with information the others don’t have, that is not good. John Elsesser suggested he be copied on requests, and that requests for more in-depth research be managed based on workload. The committee agreed to keep this item on the Steering agenda for now, unless Julie decides differently in the meantime.

9. **Consideration/Possible Action: Recommendation by Town Attorney to Repeal Ordinance:**
**Article IV., Sec. 38-91 Through Sec. 38-96, Due to Changes in State Law:**
John Elsesser provided a draft public hearing notice for the committee’s review *(attached to minutes).* **Jonathan Hand moved to recommend that the Town Council repeal Ordinance Article IV., Sec. 38-91 through Sec. 38-96, due to changes in State law.** The motion was
seconeded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote. John Elsesser noted that December 16th would be earliest that a public hearing could be held.

10. Consideration/Possible Action: Modifications to Ordinances: Inspection/Permit, Open Burning:
John Elsesser said that this item came before the last Steering Committee, but it was late in their term, so he recommends that we start over with the new Council. We could have Bud Meyers, the Fire Marshal, come in for a discussion. He came to a Steering Committee meeting a few months ago. The committee asked him for more information, and the amount of information that he provided was voluminous. It is hard to make direct comparisons. Two issues Bud should be asked to talk about are what do we want to allow for open burning, and what do we want to charge for fees. We can’t do the fees until you decide what you are going to regulate. Changing the fee schedule is something the attorney recommends be done by ordinance. It is expensive to change an ordinance, and if we’re only going to gain $500 from it, then it might not be worth doing. Jonathan Hand noted it is a balance between people wanting a rural environment and impacting the health of others. Matthew O’Brien, Jr. moved to table consideration of modifications to ordinances for inspection/permit and open burning until Bud Meyers can attend a Steering Committee meeting. The motion was seconeded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.

11. Pending issues:
A. Takeover of Avery Shores Road:
The Council’s policy on acceptance of local roads will be emailed to new Steering Committee members. John Elsesser noted that this policy has basically expired, except for two associations that have pending projects. Pine Lake Shores gave up on their initiative as it was too complicated. Waterfront Heights is still working to turn over two roads. The last remaining one is Avery Shores in the Gerald Park Association. There is a long history with Gerald Park Association regarding this road. They don’t want to follow the policy that stipulates the road must be brought up to Town standards before turning it over, but other associations have spent the money to do so. The Town doesn’t care if we own the road or not, but we do care if they are going to give us a liability. Matthew O’Brien, Jr. asked how many properties are affected. John replied it might be 40 houses. There are some legitimate concerns going back to when the sewer went in. Other roads were turned over to us; in this case we got an easement. There were some issues such as parking, speed bumps, encroachment of outbuildings etc. There was a discussion of giving a 50 foot right of way, but there is no set point to fix it from. The Association hired an attorney who basically has declared that we own the road because we plow it. We don’t agree with that because that means we own every other association road. Plus, what constitutes the road - is it the paved surface, or the whole 50 feet? The Association has also deeded portions of the land to homeowners. There are also issues about areas where the stop signs are. John recommended requesting that our attorney, Rich Roberts from Halloran and Sage, come in and share his perspective, as well as respond to the Association’s attorney. We have the right to use, but not necessarily the right to maintain the road. They need to have a defined repair program. Now it has been five years and the road continues to decline. Another option could be to help them finance the repair and set up a payment plan. Also, the middle section is not as bad, they could do it in phases as funding permits. John will check with our attorney regarding a meeting date on January 27th and will notify the rest of the Council to hold that date.

B. Correction to recreation ordinances:
John Elsesser said over the summer we found a mistake in one of our ordinances, and while we are having a public hearing we could get this one in too rather than paying to advertise two separate hearings. The reference should be 66.37, as there is no 66.27. It is a technical correction,
not a change in intent. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend setting a public hearing for the purpose of making a correction to the recreation ordinance as noted. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

C. Personnel rules and procedures – appendices: John Elsesser said these sections of the document still need to be updated. Amanda Backhaus will start the process. We will bring them forward one at a time. The council can choose how they are updated – either piecemeal or adopted all at once.

12. Thank-you letter to volunteers:
The annual thank-you letters and gifts for volunteers and employees are beginning to be distributed. Town staff will get theirs this week. Board and commission members get theirs at their next monthly meetings. The letter is written by the Council Chair. The Steering Committee selects the gift. This year’s gift is a fold-up reusable shopping tote.

13. Adjournment:
The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 PM on a motion by Julie Blanchard, seconded by Jonathan Hand and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone
Town Council Clerk
LEGAL NOTICE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
TOWN OF COVENTRY  

Notice is hereby given that the Coventry Town Council will hold a public hearing on Monday, ____________, 2019 at 7:15 P.M. at the Coventry Town Hall Annex, 1712 Main Street, Coventry, to consider the repeal of Chapter 38, Article IV of the Town Code entitled: “STORAGE, DISPOSAL, TREATMENT AND/OR PROCESSING OF WASTE FROM OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION OR EXTRACTION ACTIVITIES” on the basis that said ordinances were effectively rendered invalid by the passage of Public Act 19-112 which became effective on July 8, 2019.

The foregoing summary has been provided in lieu of publishing the proposed 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 Ordinance is available for inspection at the office of the Town Clerk, 1712 Main Street, Coventry during normal business hours, and also on the Town’s website, www.coventryct.org.

Dated at Coventry, Connecticut, this ____ day of December 2019.

Lori Tollmann, Coventry Town Clerk