

MINUTES

Coventry Town Council Meeting

January 3, 2023, 7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex & Virtual

See a video of this meeting at: <https://coventryct.viebit.com/player.php?hash=wjRKe3k6ROSV>

1. Call To Order, Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Thomas at 7:30 PM.

Members Present:

Lisa Thomas-Chairperson

Marty Milkovic-Vice-Chairperson

Matthew Kyer

Jonathan Hand-Secretary

Robyn Gallagher

John French

Julie Blanchard

Members Absent:

None

Also Present:

John Elsesser- Town Manager

Amanda Backhaus-Finance Director (Remote)

2.Pledge Of Allegiance:

All members stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

3.Audience Of Citizens: (30 Minutes - 5 minutes per person.)

No citizens present, Thomas closed Audience of Citizens portion of the meeting.

4.Acceptance Of Minutes:

4.A. Minutes: Special Town Meeting 12/19/22:

Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the December 19, 2022, special town meeting.

By: Milkovic

Seconded: Hand

Discussion/Changes:

Pg. 1, at the top, amend that the nomination of the moderator was voted on, and passed unanimously.

Voting:

For: Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic, Hand

Against: None

Abstain: None

4.B. Minutes Town Council Meeting 12/19/22:

Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the December 19, 2022, Town Council meeting.

By: Hand

Seconded: Milkovic

Discussion/Changes:

- Pg. 5, at the top where Elsesser is speaking, 2nd line, change “use common use” to “use common sense”
- Pg.1, at the bottom, under 3.A, change “McLaughlin” to “McLoughlin”
- Pg. 2, at the top, 2nd paragraph, 1st line, change “fire fighter” to “firefighter”
- Pg. 2, at the top, 2nd paragraph, 2nd line, “being recognized for capturing all the roads that are closed during storms” was discussed as being awkward to read. Suggestions were made, ultimately sentence was left the way it is.
- Pg. 2, at the top, 2nd paragraph, 3rd line, change “information put into” to “information is put into”.
- Pg. 2, at the top, 2nd paragraph, 6th line, remove the word “take” from the sentence.
- Pg. 2, 5th paragraph and throughout the minutes, change “Bereau” to “Breault”.
- Pg. 2, 5th paragraph, 5th line, add “of the year”, after “Jr. Firefighter”.
- Pg. 2, 5th paragraph, last sentence, change “Figelo” to “Figiela”.
- Pg. 2, under AOC (Christine Pattee’s statement), 5th line, change “Rouf” to “Ruef”
- Pg. 2, 3rd paragraph, change “Dewie” to “Dewey”
- Pg. 5, 2nd paragraph, change “received” to “receive” (Thomas made a point of information regarding free testing kits, that some insurance companies will cover a certain amount of testing kits per month, so it is worth asking for them at local pharmacies).
- Pg. 1, under Pledge of Allegiance, 3rd line, remove apostrophe after “Campbell”.
- Pg. 1, under Pledge of Allegiance, change “as a requirement for an Eagle badge” to “as a requirement for the rank of Eagle Scout”.
- Pg. 2, 2nd paragraph, 1st line, change “and” to “also a”.
- Pg. 2, 5th paragraph, 6th line, add “member” after “active”.
- Pg. 2, 5th paragraph, 3rd line, add dash in-between longest and tenured (longest-tenured).

Voting:

For: Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic, Hand

Against: None

Abstain: None

5.Consent Agenda:

All items listed with an asterisk (*) will be acted on by one motion. There will be no separate discussion on these items unless a Council member so requests, in which case, the item will be removed from the consent agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

Motion: I move to accept the Consent Agenda.

By: Hand

Seconded: Milkovic

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.Reports:

6.A. Council Chairwoman: Lisa Thomas:

Councilwoman Thomas read the following report:

- 1. The Town Council extends its thanks to our longtime Council clerk, Yvonne Filip, who has resigned in order to spend time with her family. We appreciate the excellent job Yvonne has done for us. Our new clerk is Nicole Archambault who is already our clerk for Steering and Finance. Welcome, Nicole.*
- 2. Thursday, January 5, is the deadline for consultants to submit to our RFP for conducting our Town Manager search. We are actually ahead of our anticipated schedule for the search. The proposals will be reviewed by the Steering Committee and then brought to the full Council.*
- 3. All Councilors please be sure to check your Town Council email during the week. As we move into budget season there might be updates and requests for special meetings. The Town Manager also sends out info from time to time that we need to be aware of in a timely manner.*
- 4. Please remember that the Town Council meeting agendas get finalized the Wednesday before each meeting. If you would like an item added to the agenda, please send your request to me by the Monday before the next regular Council meeting.*
- 5. I will hold my monthly Council Chairwoman's Office Hours at the Senior Center on Tuesday Jan. 24 at 11:00 a.m. and at the Library on Wednesday, Jan. 25 from 5:00-6:00 p.m. Councilors are welcome to join me, but no more than 2 at a time so as not to have a quorum present.*

6.B. Council Members:

Gallagher reminded everyone to go vote on the upcoming referendum on Tuesday, January 10th for the HVAC project. She explained the importance of this, and noted that there is information on the town website regarding this, and urged people to contact any council members with questions.

Milkovic added to Gallagher's comments, and stressed the importance of the HVAC system for the safety of our children. Having cleaner air and filtration will help prevent illness like COVID-19 and help with other bacteria and viruses in the air. It will also help, and be better for, those with asthma since it will reduce dust. He further informed that half of the current unit ventilators at the high school are from original construction, which was in the 60's. Voting will be at both firehouses, next Tuesday, from 6am-8pm.

6.C. Steering Committee: Matthew Kyer, Chairperson:

Kyer discussed that Steering met on 12/27/22 and had a conductive discussion regarding concerns that French brought up regarding the School Building and Energy Efficiency Committee. The town's attorney has been contacted to determine whether the committee has correctly followed procedures. Also, the need to fill vacancies on the Retirement and Pension Board was discussed.

6.C.1. Reappointments:

6.C.1.a. Parks And Recreation Commission: Carlson:

Motion: I move to reappoint Beverly Carlson to the Parks and Recreation Commission for a new term to expire 1/1/2025, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Kyer appreciates all that Carlson has done for this commission.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.1.b. Planning & Zoning Commission: Pollansky:

Motion: I move to reappoint Darby Pollansky to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a new term to expire 11/1/2025, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Kyer read the following email he sent to the PZC Chair Bill Jobbagy, regarding discussions about Pollansky's reappointment:

Good morning Bill,

Recently, there has been some confusion and, frankly, disinformation regarding the reappointment process of Darby Pollansky to the PZC. As a result, I have had to respond to emails from two PZC members and one community member to clarify. I am including my response in this email to you so that you, as chairperson, are aware.

Some weeks ago, Brian Murray, a PZC alternate, independently submitted a statement of interest asking to be moved to a

full seat on the PZC. Having submitted a statement of interest, he was entitled to an interview before the Steering Committee, as has been the practice for all prospective members of major land use boards. Denying him an interview was not an alternative.

Lisa Thomas and I deemed it unwise and unfair to interview Brian without reaching out to the other alternates to let them know about Brian's statement of interest and pending interview. We wanted to provide them the opportunity to also be interviewed mainly because they have both served as alternates for much longer than Brian. Bob expressed an interest in being considered for a full seat if one became available and subsequently submitted a statement of interest. Carol did not.

At this point, all three members have been interviewed. All voices have been heard. This, as I see it, is how the democratic process should work. There is no effort to replace a full member of the PZC. Darby has not been asked to step down, as the minutes and video of our November 28th Steering meeting will confirm.

The members of the Steering Committee now have time to reflect before we meet again. We will then make a recommendation to the full council.

I find it unfortunate that anyone would question the motives or character of the members of the Steering Committee. In my short tenure, we have unanimously recommended to full council the appointments and reappointments of numerous citizens from both parties. In fact, Darby was interviewed and subsequently reappointed to the EDC by this council last spring.

Thank you for your time Bill. I hope this provides some clarity.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.1.c. Planning & Zoning Commission - Alt. Burrington:

Motion: I move to reappoint Robert Burrington to the Planning and Zoning Commission, as an alternate, for a new term to expire 11/1/2025, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Kyer discussed that Burrington was recently reappointed in the Spring, but it was to fill the remaining term of a vacancy, and he did need in fact need to be reappointed for a new full term.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.1.d. Inland Wetlands Agency: Laramie:

Motion: I move to reappoint Patricia Laramee to the Inland Wetlands Agency for a new term to expire 9/15/2025, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: French

Discussion: Blanchard questioned that her form stated she was not a registered voter. It was clarified that she it, and it was just checked off wrong when filling out the form.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.2. Appointments:

6.C.2.a. Inland Wetlands Agency: Glenney:

Motion: I move to appoint William Glenney to the Inland Wetlands Agency for a term to expire 9/15/2024, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.2.b. Inland Wetlands Agency: Pearson:

Motion: I move to appoint Richard Pearson to the Inland Wetlands Agency for a term to expire 9/15/2023, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: French

Discussion: Milkovic commented that Pearson seems very qualified based on his statement of interest.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.2.c. Inland Wetlands Agency: Wierszchalek:

Motion: I move to appoint Stephanie Wierszchalek to the Inland Wetlands Agency for a term to expire 9/15/2025, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Kyer expressed appreciation for all these people stepping up to serve on the Inland Wetlands Agency, given the importance of having this commission fully staffed. Kyer also recognized town staff for their efforts in advertising the need for volunteers to step up. Hand emphasized that the seats aren't just filled, but filled with qualified people.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.2.d. Eastern Regional Tourism District: Mitchell:

Motion: I move to appoint Cathy Mitchell to the Eastern Regional Tourism District for a term to expire 12/1/2025, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Thomas mentioned that Mitchell is one of the co-owners of the Daniel Rust House B&B, and currently serves on the Economic Development Commission. She felt Mitchell would provide great representation for our town. Blanchard added that she is looking forward to hearing from her, once she gets acclimated to see what she is gaining from it, and how we can help contribute as a town. The Council plans to invite her to a future Town Council meeting.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.C.2.e. Senior And Affordable Housing Alternatives Study Committee: Brand:

Motion: I move to appoint Richard Brand to the Senior And Affordable Housing Alternatives Study Committee for a life-term of the committee, as recommended by the Steering Committee.

By: Kyer

Seconded: French

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

6.D.* Finance Committee: Robyn Gallagher, Chairperson

6.D.1.* Minutes, Finance Committee 12/12/2022

6.E.* COVRRRA - John A. Elsesser

6.F.Town Manager - John Elsesser:

6.F.1.Projects Update:

Elsesser highlighted the following items:

- During Winter break, the Coventry High School walls project was finished. At the next Steering meeting this committee can be discharged with appreciation. He added they may need to request additional funding for the special final inspections, as they may not have enough. However, the amount will be minuscule. He recognized the hard work of the committee for all they have done over the past several years to get this completed.
- The adopted federal budget granted \$1.2M to the Bolton sewer project, and our connection to Bolton.
- Police Chief hired Cory Weirschaleski, as our next police officer. He comes from Manchester Police Department, but grew up in Coventry.
- On Friday, I received a contract from the Department of Administration Services for a STEAP grant for softball field #2, so now this project can go out to bid.
- We are looking into a new grant called TRIP. It is a grant for transportation improvements in rural towns. Only 8 towns were deemed rural enough in the capital region. The application is due February 10th and uses a scoring matrix to be competitive. Round 2 will be competed against other districts. The capital region winner will be awarded up to \$2M. This can be used for the Broadway Culvert. We are also looking to redo some of the sidewalk areas to make them be handicap accessible at the curbs, redo some crosswalk patterns, and improve pedestrian safety.
- We have another application for a LOTCIP grant to cover the remainder of Daly Rd that isn't covered by the current LOTCIP grant. We also need to take a look at the roundabout as standards have changed, and it may need to be enhanced.

Other than that, we have a lot of other projects going on, and other grants pending. Elsesser asked for any questions on the report that was attached to the agenda, or topics he discussed.

Hand asked for more information about the firetruck. Elsesser informed that this would be Department 18's first truck, and they are just finalizing some things. Elsesser would like to have a wet down ceremony once it is received, which would happen sometime in February.

Hand also questioned the possibility of being able to buy power from the anaerobic digester at Hytone Farm. Elsesser informed that they have offered it at 15% low market rate, but we would need to be locked in a long-term contract of 5 years, so we need to evaluate it further. Last year, at a reverse auction, Elsesser locked us in for electricity services for 5 years at .09 cents per kilowatt. We also have other solar options we are looking at with the microgrid. Those contracts are being reviewed which will help us make a decision. He emphasized that there are a lot of things going on right now. Elsesser also mentioned looking into future planning regarding collecting food waste, as it is 30% of our waste right

now, which could be added to the anaerobic digester as a significant contribution and save us money on trash disposal.

Thomas questioned if there was a sense of power we would get from Hytone Farm's anaerobic digester. She understands that it would not power the whole town, but was curious as to what it could do. Elsesser explained he would need to look into it more to have that information, but is continuing to work with them. He also made a comment that with solar power, there is no distribution costs, and made note that we are doing well with energy efficiency as a town.

Blanchard noted she read in the JI, that Farmers Cow, has over 1000 acres and asked if that was accurate. Elsesser and Thomas discussed that must entail all of the farms that make up Farmers Cow, and Hytone Farm is about 150 acres.

Elsesser informed everyone that the PZC looked at truck traffic coming and going from Hytone Farm, but it was determined that there would only be about 8 trucks per day and would cause minimal impact on Rte. 44. He added that this is less trucks than when the farms are spreading manure.

6.F.2.COVID-19 Update:

Elsesser explained that the holidays were not good, and that there are a lot employees out. He urged that people need to use common sense, as it is not just covid, but the flu that is present right now too.

7.Unfinished Business:

7.A.21/22-18: Consideration/Possible Action: Assignment Of American Rescue Plan Funding:

Thomas noted that there are no changes on this agenda item, and it will remain on the agenda.

8.New Business:

8.A.22/23-44: Consideration/Possible Action: Approval Of Explanatory Text:

Motion: I move that we approve the explanatory text as revised.

By: Milkovic

Seconded: Hand

Discussion:

Elsesser explained he did his best to keep this neutral and non-biased. He explained that multiple legal counsels have looked over this text. One of which noted that we should include that the assessed value of \$176,890, is 70% of market value. Elsesser noted that a lot of information in this text came directly from the presentation. The only thing that was highlighted was the questions box. See below:

What happens if this question does not pass? *The Town Council will need to call another question to allow the excess roof funds to be repurposed to allow the classroom unit ventilators to proceed this summer with the remainder of the high school roof (duct work to be installed by roofer).*

What happens if the question passes and we don't get the grant? *The Town Council has committed that they will only continue with the original scope of work to replace the classroom unit ventilators.*

Thomas clarified that the explanatory text explains that the additional expense to taxpayers, after grant funding and left-over bond money, would be \$2.1M. She continued that also in the text it states that \$2.1M would be needed by the town whether the larger project happens or not, for the unit ventilators. Elsesser also added, if this question does not pass, we will still need to go back to a vote to re-allocate the left-over roof bond money. This would need to happen quickly as we are trying to get this work out to bid for Summer.

Milkovic noted, it looks like it would be an annual impact of \$12.72 per median household to fund that amount, which is incredibly low. Elsesser confirmed that it would not be this next year, but in the future.

Hand offered some grammar corrections for the text, prior to being published, as follows:

- In the proposed scope of work box, above the bulleted list, move the 's' off of the word "include", and add it to the end of "project".
- 1st word of each bullet point, should be in agreement. Change 3rd bullet point from "Replacement" to "Replacing".
- The paragraph following the bulleted list is missing a period, one needs to be added.

Gallagher commented that it appears the unit ventilators will need to be replaced no matter what, but did not realize that project would add up to \$2.1M. Backhaus confirmed that it would. Gallagher suggested that this be made clearer by referencing the unit ventilators and roof top units in the document. Backhaus informed that the \$2.1M will not cover the roof top units, it will only cover the unit ventilators. Elsesser commented that the roof top units are included in the capital budget. It was suggested that it be clarified that the \$2.1M is needed for the unit ventilators regardless, even if the project fails at vote.

Thomas clarified that as a town we can spend \$2.1M to get just unit ventilators, or we can spend \$2.1M and get unit ventilators, roof top units, and upgraded HVAC systems with chilling.

Backhaus noted that we have \$1.4M left over from the roof replacement bond, that is being put into this project.

Blanchard commented that we are not only spending \$2.1M, even though the other amounts have already been set aside, we should not phrase it like that. We are requesting \$2.1M additional funding from the town, but are also spending \$2.7M from other bonds. Thomas noted the \$1.3M left over from the roof bond would be spent either way, and Backhaus further clarified there is \$1.4M left over from the energy bond too.

The questions, in the question box, were discussed regarding best options for editing. Elsesser also noted, if the ductwork is not installed when the roofers are there in the Spring doing the roofs, then later on when they need to do roof top units, the new roofs will need to be penetrated. This might void the warranty or cause issues, in addition, we would need to pay for another contractor to come in.

Backhaus discussed that if this does not pass, then the \$1.3M in roof bonds would need to be reallocated. We would need to have a separate referendum to reallocate these funds. With the left-over bond money, we would be able to cover the \$2.1M expense, but then we would only get the unit ventilators and nothing else. We would also have the expense of another referendum to be able to do this.

Milkovic felt that the explanatory text was complicated, but it is a complicated issue. Hand emphasized that the point of the explanatory text is to make it clearer for people.

Gallagher provided a clearer statement to be included in the explanatory text, that all council members agreed too. Elsesser will make the revisions, and resubmit it to the legal counsel before it is distributed to the public. He added that his office will do a Facebook post. It was noted Laura Stone returns this week and can help distribute this to the public.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Milkovic, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French

Against: None

Abstain: None

9.Miscellaneous/Correspondence:

9.A.* Board Of Education Draft Minutes 12/8/22

10.Adjournment

Motion: I move that the Council adjourn at 8:29 p.m.

By: Milkovic

Seconded: French

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Milkovic, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard, French

Against: None

Abstain: None

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole Archambault

Nicole Archambault, Minutes Clerk

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