MINUTES
COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
FEBRUARY 3, 2020
TOWN HALL ANNEX
7:30 P.M.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call
The meeting was called to order by Blanchard at 7:30 p.m.

Members present:
Julie Blanchard – Chair
Lisa Conant
Jonathan Hand
Matthew O’Brien, Jr.
Matthew O’Brien, Sr. – Vice Chair
Lisa Thomas
Richard Williams – Secretary

Also present: John Elsesser – Town Manager

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:
All present stood to recite the pledge.

3. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:
(30 minutes – 5 minutes maximum per citizen)

Blanchard read a statement regarding claims made against a town employee. The claims are being taken seriously and there is an on-going investigation. Until the Town Council is charged with taking action, it and its Members have been advised not to speak about the matter. Patience is urged in this matter. The statement is attached to these minutes.

Debra Zeppa, 93 West Shore Drive – She is a lakefront resident. In 2015 fly board usage threatened the lake. Through efforts of DEEP resources and Town officials this threat was resolved. Hydrilla was found in the lake in the Fall of 2015. We knew it would be a long and expensive battle against the invasive. The treatments to the lake since then are reducing the presence of hydrilla. Zeppa appreciates the Council’s goal in regards to both lakes.

Jennifer Burdette, 154 Bear Swamp Road – Commented she was surprised to hear Blanchard’s opening statement for this part of the meeting. Burdette asked through emails to Council members that the matter of the investigation of the town employee be added to the agenda. The silence was deafening and she felt ignored. Ms. Burdette suggests the courtesy of a response within a reasonable time. She heard nothing back and found from the online agenda that her asked for item was not included. Then she heard from the Town Manager as to why this was. Therefore, Burdette appreciates that Blanchard made mention of the matter in the statement without adding it as an agenda item. Ms. Burdette thanked the citizens of Coventry for the support shown. This has meant much to the family. Burdette read a statement from her daughter, Amber, echoing the support that has been shown. They wish to prevent such an incident happening to someone else. And to show that Coventry...
cares about the youth. There are many fine police officers and they should be respected for the jobs they do. Ms. Burdette has supported and taught her children to support police officers. Unfortunately, this incident now makes her hesitate to do so. The family has experienced an outpouring of love and concern.

Carol Chipkin, 454 Cassidy Hill Road – Spoke about the expanded definitions of what a library should be as contained in the minutes of the September 11, 2019 meeting. Her statement is attached.

Linda Blakesley, 27 Barry Ave. – She has been prompted to speak in support of Jennifer and Amber. She was appalled to learn what happened to Amber years ago. She is appalled by the actions of Town leaders. Females need to feel safe in coming forward about inappropriate attention from anyone in town. Blakesley is not getting that feeling. She does not trust the Chief of Police as he withheld information. Ms. Blakesley wants the Council to consider removing him from that position.

This portion of the meeting was closed by Blanchard.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:
4.A. January 21, 2020
Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the January 21, 2020 meeting.

By: Conant Seconded: O’Brien, Sr.

Discussion: Hand commented that citizens took the time to attend and comment. This is the second time the statements were not attached as indicated. This is an important issue dealing with transparency.

With the following corrections:
• Page 3, Kennelly comment – change “in” to “is”.
• Page 3, Breitenwischer comment – change “Mark” to “Barbara”.
• Page 6, item 8.B. – change third sentence to read “One event is for Girl Scouts to create a badge project around women’s right to vote.” And “There is an event of having groups look at an ‘I Voted’ design.” Change “Council” to “Board of Education”.
• Page 7, first bullet – change “PESCE” to “PEGPETI”.
• Page 7, second bullet – this is in reference to finding a homeowner with a crumbling concrete foundation.
• Page 7, item 8.F.3., last sentence – remove “though”; add “forward to the Assessor”.
• Page 8, item 10, second paragraph – change “Bachhaus” to “Backhaus”.
• Page 9, first paragraph, fourth sentence -- change “is” to “has”.
• Page 9, third paragraph, tenth sentence – add a comma after “this”.
• Page 10, item 10.C., first paragraph – add “Fire/EMS Administrator” before “Jim McLaughlin”.
• Page 11, item 10.E., motion – change “to” to “that the Town Council”.
• Page 11, item 10.F., discussion, third sentence – remove “the”.
• Page 11, item 11.A. – add “Her current status is she has taken one class and opened a P.O. and signed up for classes at UConn.”.
Voting:  
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams  
Against: None  
Abstain: None  

4.B. Special Meeting: January 28, 2020  
Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the January 28, 2020 special meeting.  

By: O’Brien, Sr.  
Seconded: Hand  

With the following corrections:  
• Change the date in the heading from “2019” to “2020”.  
• Change “Attny” to “Atty”.  

Voting:  
For: Hand, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams, Conant  
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 members 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: Thomas  
Seconded: Conant  

Discussion: Hand would like to remove 6.F.5. from the consent agenda. Williams would like 9.B. removed from the consent agenda.  

Voting:  
For: O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Conant, Thomas, Williams  
Against: None  
Abstain: None  

6. REPORTS:  
6.A. Council Chairwoman: Julie A. Blanchard  
Blanchard mentioned that she hopes people have noticed the flagpoles, benches, and lighting in front of Town Hall. Ackert Electric donated the labor to install the lights. Elsesser commented that several students with the Master of Gardening UConn class will enhance the stone work with plantings in the spring. The Town will purchase the plants.  

6.B. Council Members:  
O’Brien, Sr attended the first meeting of the Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee. Stave was appointed Chairperson, Wilmot was appointed Vice Chairperson, and Pattee was appointed Secretary. Clarification of the charge may be needed. Successful projects have been blended projects having a few smaller, low income units in the development. The need
is present. The committee is to explore and evaluate alternative housing for seniors holding two meetings per month. The committee will return to the Council in six months. Elsesser added the Council has not appointed a designee to the committee. There is one vacancy that can be a representative from the Housing Authority. These two items should be handled by the Steering Committee.

Thomas commented the last agenda included notes from the School Readiness Committee. It was clear these are professionals dedicated to the younger children to make the children ready for a successful kindergarten year. The pre-school is clearly a learning environment. The pre-school is not a babysitting service. The staff are dedicated education professionals. The staff is doing what needs to be done to get to social and emotional success in addition to educational success. Some children are coming into the school system with trauma. The notes were helpful.

O’Brien, Jr. reported the committee is reviewing the public gathering ordinance that was recently amended. The review includes the permit processing time, the age requirement of 21 years, and why gatherings over 300 people was decided upon. The committee will also be talking to representatives of emergency services.

Thomas mentioned there is reference to a letter from Chris Morgan that some Members have not seen. The letter was emailed directly to the Steering Committee with comments similar to his comments during the Audience of Citizens section of the public hearing. Thomas added communications should go out to all Council members. It is not good transparency otherwise.

6.C.1. Reappointments
6.C.1.a. HUD Housing Rehab/Fair Housing Commission: Roach
Motion: I move to reappoint Marjorie Roach to the HUD Housing Rehab/Fair Housing Commission; term to expire 12/31/2021.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Hand

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

Motion: I move to reappoint Marjorie Roach to the Human Rights Commission; term to expire 01/01/2022.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Conant

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

6.C.1.c. Parks & Recreation Commission: Rodgers
**Motion:** I move to reappoint Jennifer Rodgers to the Parks & Recreation Commission; term to expire 01/01/2022.

By: O'Brien, Jr.  Seconded: Hand

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

**6.C.2. Appointments**

**6.C.2.a. Sobol: Eastern Regional Tourism District**

**Motion:** I move to appoint Michael Sobol as the representative for the Town to the Eastern Regional Tourism District; for a term of three years.

By: O'Brien, Jr.  Seconded: Hand

Discussion: This is a brand-new commission. Tourism districts were restructured creating a large district in eastern Connecticut. This created a problem getting a meeting quorum resulting in the State taking back money. Every town should have one representative. This group will discuss how to best spend tourism money and provide ongoing reports. The Windham Economic Director finally received an answer from an administrative person indicating the procedures will not allow an alternate representative even though other towns have asked for this allowance.

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

**6.C.2a.i. Eastern Regional Tourism District: Pare**

Elsesser commented Barbara Pare was another interested candidate for this commission. Pare is a business owner with interest in promoting Coventry and the interests of the town. However, we recently found out that an alternate to the commission is not a possibility. The good news is that there is a wealth of volunteers in town.

Thomas commented it is not clear from the agenda that Pare was being recommended as an alternate. The Steering Committee minutes are clearer. Hand added that Pare’s interest was discussed and it was decided if the tourism commission allows alternates Pare would be recommended for the position.

**Motion:** I move to amend the agenda to indicate this was for the position of Alternate of the Eastern Regional Tourism District and table the matter.

By: O'Brien, Jr.  Seconded: O'Brien, Sr.

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None


6.D. *Finance Committee: Matthew O’Brien, Sr., Chairperson

6.E. *COVRAA – John A. Elsesser:

6.F. Town Manager – John A. Elsesser:

6.F.1. Projects Update

- CRCOG reported 129 households have been reimbursed for crumbling foundation replacement. Coventry has received the last household needed in order to close out the grant.
- The State is doing the design work for the Hop River Road bridge. Borings are being done to determine where the bedrock is. The bridge will be closed February 10-11 for this work. Road alert signs will be posted, five residences will be notified via flyers on the mailboxes. The Columbia Town Administrator will be notified. Thomas asked if a reverse phone call blast will be used? Elsesser replied it could; it may have to be a town-wide blast although the possibility of a geographic area blast will be researched.
- The IWA permit has been approved for the Folly Lane bridge and final adjustments are being made to the design. Minor, temporary widening of the driveway to the golf course is being considered in order that tractor trailers making deliveries can turn around. We are waiting to find out if this work will be covered by the grant. We do not want to widen the road. A response from the natural database diversity list is pending.
- Swamp Road realignment - The traffic division of CTDOT did not show at the planning meeting last year. Now that entity is seeking a traffic signal redesign that would require new signals. The lead time to buy a signal is three to four months. Coventry may have to pay an engineer to redesign the signal or DOT may do the design work. LOTCIP is not happy with this turn of events. A third option is being discussed – put the project out to bid, build the new connector and barricade it from use until the new traffic signal is in place.
- The School parking lot project is slated for this summer. It cannot be started until the third or fourth week in June. The design is being worked on and the conduit lines have been marked.
- We are leaning towards reapplying for major renovations at Orchard Hills through a grant of $1.5 million. A public hearing set for next Monday will allow people to ask about other options. The grant application is due in April.
- Land Use Director Eric Trott reported the hydrilla survey has been submitted. It is believed Solitude will keep to the same treatment chemical. There is at least one more year of whole lake treatment. There is minor impact to good grasses, but these do rebound. A residual effect of this chemical is getting rid of phragmites. The benthic barrier removal will take place at the end of June/beginning of July.
- Conant asked for a status on the crosswalk project. Elsesser replied it has been taken back from the outside engineer. Willington recently went through such a project.
Town Engineer Todd Penney will be speaking with Willington officials about the process they took.

Elsesser reported this notice has been received each year for the past four to five years. The railroad has a legal obligation to clear the rail lines of vegetation that could catch fire. Chemicals are used along the railways for this program. Hand asked if this is similar to what DOT does along roadways? Elsesser replied DOT uses commercial Roundup; the railroad uses a stronger chemical similar to what Eversource uses.

6.F.3. Micro grid Update
Most of the tiles are installed with interesting data already coming through. Financing plans continue to be worked on. One issue to be clarified is the possibility of not charging property tax. Hand commented it seems silly to charge property taxes resulting in being charged more for electricity. If the company starts selling energy outside of town, we will look at property taxation. A joint meeting was held with the engineer to craft an RFP for the design/build of the microgrid. The draft RFP will be available Thursday for the School Building Committee. Calculations of the heat transfer will be relied upon for what they want us to accept. The BOE has to have net zero, if not net reductions. A model is being built because every school has different contract rates based on usage and building size. The calculations will show the current and future rates. Based on this model, determinations to buy in will be made by the BOE and Council. Recourses should be known if actual usage is different. UConn has their own power plant. There is a similar project in Bridgeport and one in the Hartford area.

The list went up 4.6%. Mike is working in pulling together reports including trying to isolate new growth. Interesting data was recently published in the Hartford Courant. The article showed that Coventry paid $22 million in income tax to the State. Tolland paid only one million more and Avon $113 million. As a whole, we are not a poor community.

Hand asked this be removed from the Consent Agenda as he wants to highlight this great program. This is a free training course through the Parks & Rec department. This is 2.5 hours of training that could help to save someone’s life by teaching folks how to stop the bleed. Accidents causing bleeding happen all the time. This is a great offering in the community. More courses will be offered over time. Hand thanks the Council and Carolyn Arabolos for bringing this course forward. Conant added the course is helpful and short and sweet. Coventry is a semi-rural community with volunteer services. It is not a place where there is a walk-in clinic around the corner when seconds count.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
7.A. 19/20-37: Consideration/Possible Action: COPS Hiring Program/School Resource Officer (Not Ready For Action)
Elsesser reported he and Chief Palmer will be meeting with the Superintendent of Schools in which they are looking for agreement to go forward with the grant application. Should the
grant be awarded to Coventry, permission to move forward will be needed from the BOE

8. NEW BUSINESS:
8.A. 19-20-42: Consideration/Possible Action: Appropriation From CNREF In Amount Not To Exceed $25,000 For South And Swamp Road
Motion: I move to authorize up to $26,000 for application engineering of the South and Swamp Roads project.

Discussion: Elsesser stated the quote is $25,400 with the figure being rounded up for incidental costs.

By: Hand Seconded: Conant

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

8.B. 19/20-43: Consideration/Possible Action: Rescind Ordinance No. 125, Sections 2-271 to 2-275, Insurance Advisory Committee And Call To Public Hearing
This matter is under discussion at the Steering Committee. A public hearing is set for March 2, 2020. The hearing notice was read into the record by O’Brien, Sr.

Motion: I move to call this to a public hearing for March 2, 2020 at 7:15 p.m. in the Town Hall Annex.

By: O’Brien, Sr. Seconded: Hand

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

8.C. 19/20-44: Consideration/Possible Action: Appropriation From CNREF For Engineering For Repairs Of CHS Walls
Motion: I move to approve the appropriation from CNREF for the engineering for repairs to CHS walls.

By: Williams Seconded: Hand

Friendly amendment suggested and accepted: For a sum not to exceed $12,000.

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

8.D. 19/20-45: Consideration/Authorization To Execute A License Agreement With The Estate Of Adelma Simmons To Facilitate An Adaptive Reuse Request For
Proposals

Motion: I move to execute a license agreement with the estate of Adelma Simmons to facilitate an adaptive reuse request for proposals.

By: Hand                  Seconded: Conant

Discussion: A certificate of insurance would be the simple approach. However, this agreement is the better approach for liability. This is for a one-year term. Inspection of the Caprilands property will be done and a report of the findings provided to the Council. One building may be considered too far gone to renovate. Some parties may want to submit an application for adaptive reuse of the property. The Town is not taking control of the property; we are partnering with the executor of the estate. This provides control of who is going to bid on the property with some say in adaptive reuse. This is similar to the Kenyon Falls. We will be writing an RFP for what we are looking for in regards to future use of the Caprilands property. A good score and ranking system is being developed if there are multiple responses to the RFP. The probate judge has authorized the executor to sell the property. We are trying to align the future of the property with Ms. Simmons’ intent in her will. The goal is to have the RFPs returned by the end of June and a decision by September. This would be expressing Coventry’s opinion on the future use of the land. Land Use Director Eric Trott will find out from the executor if there is a minimum sales price that is being sought. A new owner would need to have the financial wherewithal to implement his/her plan. It will come down to what is acceptable to the executor and the probate judge. The alternative is going out to the private sector. Someone has expressed an interest to having dirt bikes running through the property.

Williams asked why we are doing this? Elsesser replied for the economic development possibility. Simmons ran a business of world renown. Coventry would like to get the property back to a similar endeavor, build on it, and move forward. Reuse of Kenyon Falls was not moving forward until the Town got involved with the property. Coventry has no intention of owning the property; we are nudging toward an acceptable reuse. Thomas added the Town has a financial interest as taxes are owed on the property.

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

9. MISCELLANEous/CORRESPONDENCE:
9.A. Sabino: Concerns, Housing Authority
A letter was received by a person who lives at Orchard Hills. Blanchard referred this to the Steering Committee.

9.B. *Board Of Education: 01-30-2020 Meeting, Agenda
Williams commented on the agenda item regarding the April 28, 2020 primaries. He noted the discussion revolved around the primaries being held in the school and BOE is considering keeping school in session that day. Why cannot the firehouse be used for voting? Elsesser replied state law changed two years ago with the primary elections having to be in the same location as the presidential election so as not to confuse voters and they must be in a municipal building. The BOE is working with Sgt. Opdenbrouw on a plan for parking.
Williams is concerned about the school being open from a school safety standpoint and from a voting perspective. There is not much parking to begin with.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION:
Motion: I move that the Town Council enter into Executive Session pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(D)-discussion of the selection of a site or the lease, sale or purchase of real estate by a political subdivision of the state when publicity regarding such a site, lease, sale, purchase or construction would cause a likelihood of an increased price until such time as all of the property has been acquired or all proceedings or transactions concerning same have been terminated or abandoned the following people in attendance the seven members of the Town Council, Town Manager John Elsesser and the Finance Director.

By: O'Brien, Sr. Seconded: O'Brien, Jr.

Voting:
For: Hand, Cnatt, Blanchard, O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

Motion: I move that the Town Council enter into Executive Session pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(D)-discussion of any matter which would result in the disclosure of public records or the information therein contained described in subsection (b) of Section 1-210 with the following people in attendance the seven members of the Town Council, Town Manager John Elsesser, and the Finance Director.

By: O'Brien, Sr. Seconded: Conant

Voting:
For: Hand, Cnatt, Blanchard, O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

The Council entered Executive Session at 9:16 p.m.

The Council exited Executive Session at 9:43 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT:
Motion: I move that we adjourn at 9:44 p.m.

By: Conant Seconded: O'Brien, Sr.

Voting:
For: Hand, Cnatt, Blanchard, O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None
Respectfully Submitted,
Yvonne B. Filip
Yvonne B. Filip, Town Council 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.
Hello – my name is Carol Chipkin, and I live at 454 Cassidy Hill Road. I worked at a Connecticut library for 16 years so I feel qualified to speak on the proposed library expansion.

According to the minutes of the September 11, 2019 meeting of the Booth & Dimock library renovation and improvement committee, there were 6 expanded definitions of what a library should be. Said another way, six reasons for expanding the library.

First reason: “Children have been turned away from programs due to current space limitations”. A larger community room paired with adequate parking can alleviate this situation.” How many children would you suggest a space accommodate, would 20, 30, 50 or 100 be enough? Has anyone run a program involving for more than 15 five year olds? I have, and it is very difficult. Why do schools in Coventry have class size limitations? If you insist on running a program with no size limitations, the town of Coventry has community rooms available with adequate parking.

Second: “A library also provides Technology and IT assistance.” Yes, and it currently does. The library should have some computers with reference and resource information, but the IT assistance is limited.

Third: “Tax help.” Unless you plan on hiring a tax accountant, tax help should be limited to reference and on-line information; otherwise, you’re going to be sued.

Fourth: “shelter during power outages.” This is nonsense. The town has facilities to provide shelter during power outages, i.e.: schools, fire stations, public works department, and the senior center (just to name a few).
Fifth: “programs for children and adults,” has already been discussed.

Sixth: “protection for historical records, valuable portraits, historical artifacts and community value.” Where are they presently being stored? I am only aware of libraries that are required to exhibit materials in exchange for private funding endowments.

I believe these additional functions proposed by the library committee were not thought through. They were put forward solely to support an expensive physical expansion of “Booth and Dimock”. If the town feels any or all are necessary, they can be performed in settings other than the library building.
We are aware that certain claims have been made against a Town employee. Those claims are being taken seriously and are in the process of being thoroughly investigated by the appropriate authorities. Until such time as the investigation has been completed, findings have been made, and the Town Council is charged with taking action with regard to any such findings it would be inappropriate for the Town Council as a whole, or any Council member in particular, to comment upon the claims or the status of the investigation. In the meantime, we urge patience with the required process and know that the whole Council has confidence that our Police Department, the State Police and Town Management will bring this investigation to a timely conclusion.

The Town Council has met with our Town Attorneys and are following their advice. We respect the process, our police department and officers who work hard every day and are committed to providing service to the community.

2/3/20
Julie Blanchard
Council Chair