Minutes
Coventry Town Council Meeting
February 4, 2019
Town Hall Annex

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
   **Present:** Joan Lewis, Lisa Conant, Jonathan Hand, Mike Sobol, Julie Blanchard, Carolyn Arabolos, Matthew O’Brien
   **Also present:** John Elsesser, Town Manager; Amanda Backhaus, Finance Director

2. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. **Audience of Citizens:**
   
   Christine Pattee, 98 Brookline Road, was present to request what she would like to be included in the budget for the Senior Center, based on her informal conversations with other participants at the center during lunches and various activities. The seniors are happy with the lunches. What they would really like is a full-time assistant, which would allow Brenda to focus more on programming. At present the assistant only works 12 hours per week and 19 hours a week is the maximum you can work without getting benefits. Going to full time would be better for the Center and means a young woman would have a full-time position in her career. If we had a full time assistant, it would help with coverage and allow the Center to be open on Fridays. Seniors are 16% of the town’s population. Christine asked that the Town Council consider a full time position which is not shared with Recreation because they have their own needs.

   The Town Council recognized Albert Bradley for over 50 years of volunteer service. Joan Lewis said that over the years we have had a lot of people who have given their time to assist their fellow community members. Al served with her late husband on the Board of Finance and was a member of the first Town Council. She read a resolution outlining his contributions and thanking him for his service. Albert thanked the Council, noting that the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree as his father served as chair of the Democratic Town Committee for 25 years. Mr. Bradley received a round of applause.

4. **Acceptance of Minutes:**
   **Motion #18/19-175: Carolyn Arabolos moved and Mike Sobol seconded to accept the minutes of the Town Council meeting on January 22, 2019.** The following corrections were requested:
   - Page 4, item 8.C.2., third line: change “During the year they” to “During the year the Board of Education…”
   - Page 6, item 9.A. fourth line from bottom: Change: “There is a formula in 5118” to “There is a paragraph for calculating tuition in 5118…”
   - Page 7, fifth paragraph, last line, add after abstaining: “because he didn’t have information to make a decision…”
   - Page 8, item 10.C., last line: add “monthly” prior to “reporting.”

   **The motion to accept the minutes as amended carried with Julie Blanchard abstaining and all other members in favor.**

5. **Consent Agenda:**
   **Motion #18/19-176: Jonathan Hand moved and Carolyn Arabolos seconded to accept the Consent Agenda.** Julie Blanchard requested to remove item 6.D.1, Finance Committee minutes.
The motion to accept the Consent Agenda as amended carried on unanimous vote.

6. Reports:

A. Council Chairwoman – Joan Lewis:
- The Recreation Department was recognized for risk management in youth sports by CIRMA. They were awarded a cash prize which will go toward coach training and equipment. Congratulations to staff members Wendy Rubin and Cat Merriam.
- On February 16th from 11 am – 5 pm a Winter Stroll event will take place along Main Street in the Village sponsored by the Main Street Partners. There will be exhibits, businesses will be open and offering special discounts, and the church will also be participating. Mark your calendars.
- Thanks to the firefighters and emergency personnel, including those from other towns, who responded to the house fire on Main Street last week. It was cold and we appreciate it.
- Joan went to the welcoming reception for the exchange program visitors from China. It was a lovely ceremony.

A.1. Budget Meeting Schedule: A proposed schedule for budget meetings with the Town Council and select departments was included with the agenda. Joan Lewis asked if Council members want to meet with additional departments other than those listed. Julie Blanchard would like to make time to hear from the Registrars of Voters. There are budget issues there and she would like to hear about their needs and how their time is divided. John Elsesser noted that only one party submitted a budget and we asked specific questions regarding their hours during our internal budget meeting that have not been answered.

B. Council members:
Matthew O’Brien said he had sent a request for additional information about the MOA for non-resident student tuition with the Board of Education, and wanted to attach his request to the minutes. He also shared an article from the town of Danbury where concerns have been raised about excessive curve signage, similar to concerns expressed by several Coventry residents (attached to minutes).

I. New Business:
H. 18/19-52: Consideration/Possible Action: Modification of Charge to Library Renovation & Improvement Committee to Increase Membership to Seven Voting Members and no Alternates: Motion #18/19-177: Jonathan Hand moved to modify the charge to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee to increase the membership to seven voting members and no alternate, seconded by Carolyn Arabolos. Matthew O’Brien asked why no alternate is being appointed. John Elsesser replied an alternate is not needed once you get to seven members. Matthew said he was pleased and surprised at the number of people who came forward to serve and we should take the opportunity to bring them into the process. Motion #18/19-177 carried on unanimous vote.

C. Steering Committee – Jonathan Hand: Jonathan reported that we have a lot going on and a number of appointments to make.

Motion #18/19-178: Jonathan Hand moved to add consideration of the appointment of Joshua Gemmell to the School Energy and Building Efficiency Building Committee as item 6.C.3.i. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried on unanimous vote.
6.C.1. Inland Wetlands Agency: Creation of vacancy for McNaboe departure: Motion #18/19-179: Jonathan Hand moved to create a vacancy on the Inland Wetlands Agency due to the departure of Luke McNaboe from the Town of Coventry. The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien and carried on unanimous vote.

6.C.2. Reappointments:

A. Motion #18/19-180: Jonathan Hand moved to reappoint Barbara Barry to the Ad-hoc Farmers’ Market Operating Committee, term to expire 12/12/2021. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

B. Motion #18/19-181: Jonathan Hand moved to reappoint Jean Nelson to the Ad-hoc Farmers’ Market Operating Committee, term to expire 12/27/2021. The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien and carried on unanimous vote.

C. Motion #18/19-182: Jonathan Hand moved to reappoint Katrina Weaver to the Ad-hoc Farmers’ Market Operating Committee, term to expire 12/27/2021. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried on unanimous vote.

D. Motion #18/19-183: Jonathan Hand moved to reappoint Arthur Hall, Jr. to the Conservation Commission, term to expire 1/1/2013. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried on unanimous vote.

E. Motion #18/19-184: Jonathan Hand moved to reappoint Sondra Astor Stave to the Economic Development Commission, term to expire 2/2/2024. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried with Julie Blanchard opposed and all other members in favor.

6.C.3. Appointments:

A-G. Library Renovation & Improvement Committee:

Motion #18/19-185: Jonathan Hand moved to appoint the following individuals to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee: Tim Ackert, William Bonney, Dudley Brand, Jim Parda, John Twerdy, Joseph Jankowski as the Library Board representative, and Deborah Walsh as the Town Council representative. The motion was seconded by Carolyn Arabolos.

Motion #18/19-186: Julie Blanchard moved to appoint Christopher Morgan to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee. The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien.

Joan Lewis said that a list of each candidate’s qualifications was included in the Council folder. Joan said we have more than seven nominees and she will call for a vote on each individual. Mike Sobol said there are a lot of people interested and it is nice we have so many people with varied interests. He asked to verify whether Joe Malon is being considered. Joan replied that Joe also put his name in to be considered for the School Building Committee so we will consider him for that. Mike asked if there are requirements for party affiliation. John replied that no more than four people from any party can serve on a seven member committee.

Motion #18/19-187: Appointment of Tim Ackert to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee for the duration of the committee’s work: carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #18/19-188: Appointment of William Bonney to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee for the duration of the committee’s work: carried on unanimous vote.
Motion #18/19-189: Appointment of Dudley Brand to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee for the duration of the committee’s work: carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #18/19-190: Appointment of Joseph Jankowski to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee as the Library Board of Trustees representative for the duration of the committee’s work: carried with Arabolos, Hand, Conant, Lewis and Sobol in favor; Blanchard and O’Brien opposed.

Motion #18/19-191: Appointment of Christopher Morgan to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee for the duration of the committee’s work. Matthew O’Brien said he hopes everyone read Chris’ email. Chris made some good points and Matthew thinks he would be a good addition to the committee. Mike Sobol agreed, saying Chris has made an effort to be involved. Mike would like to see this be a balanced committee with party affiliation of 3-3-1. Motion #18/19-192 failed with Blanchard, O’Brien and Sobol in favor; Arabolos, Hand, Conant and Lewis opposed.

Motion #18/19-192: Appointment of Jim Parda to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee for the duration of the committee’s work: carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #18/19-193: Appointment of John Twerdy to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee for the duration of the committee’s work: carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #18/19-194: Appointment of M. Deborah Walsh to the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee as the Town Council representative for the duration of the committee’s work: carried with Arabolos, Hand, Conant and Lewis in favor; Blanchard, O’Brien and Sobol opposed.

Matthew O’Brien asked to verify what the Steering Committee recommended for membership. When they made their recommendations it was only a five-member committee and we don’t have the minutes yet. John Elsesser replied that the Steering Committee recommendations are the appointments listed on tonight’s agenda. Jonathan Hand said if you look at the list of qualifications we did have an embarrassment of riches and we did try to take advantage of that by increasing the size of the committee. Matthew said we did discuss expanding the committee at Steering, but did not vote on it. He feels steering should have come to that decision and recommended seven people at the committee level.

H. Motion #18/19-195: Jonathan Hand made a motion to move Robert Martin from an alternate to a full member on the Parks & Recreation Commission, term to expire 1/1/2021. The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien and carried on unanimous vote.

I. Motion #18/19-196: Jonathan Hand moved to appoint Joshua Gemmell to the School Energy and Building Efficiency Building Committee for the life of the committee’s work. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant. John Elsesser said this appointment would fill the slot for Danielle Kloster who has resigned. Matthew noted that Mr. Gemmell is extremely well qualified. Joan Lewis said the committee is meeting this Thursday so it would be great to add him. Jonathan said that the committee has had difficulty achieving a quorum. Motion #18/19-196 carried on unanimous vote.

D.1. Finance Committee, Minutes of January 14, 2019: Julie Blanchard removed this item from the Consent Agenda because she had a question on page four where Jennifer Beausoleil references a verbal agreement. Julie asked who made the verbal agreement. John Elsesser replied that there was
agreement at the staff level - staff was instructed to meet with Supt. Petrone and School Business Manager Carroll. There was a verbal agreement at the staff level to bring it up to the next level.

Matthew O'Brien noted that on page six of the minutes it says the state budget is woefully adequate and the word should be inadequate. Carolyn will request that correction when the minutes are approved by the Finance Committee.

E. COVRRRA – John Elsesser:
We are continuing to work on getting stickers printed for the recycling barrels. We went back for additional pricing to get a more durable product. Jonathan asked if the sticker could be placed inside the lid. John replied we asked about that, but that surface is not level. Getting the stickers on the bins will be a whole different challenge. We will have to send somebody out. We are getting an increasing amount of unacceptable recycling so we are getting charged a penalty. Don’t put plastic wrap in the recycling barrel - it is the number one contaminant. Don’t put Styrofoam in the recycling bin either. Those items have to be hand-picked out and it is too labor intensive.

Matthew O'Brien said if we are going to consider moving the transfer station, he would like a study to be done regarding potential impact. John replied that it may be cheaper to renovate vs. build new but there are operational savings to having the transfer station in a more central location.

E1. Waiver of purchasing policy: John Elsesser said we tried to do reference checks on the new bidder who has electronics recycling. Our best guess is that staying with our existing vendor would cost about $500 in credits. Currently we have Take Two and they are a Connecticut firm. We have been with them about five years. The new vendor is from New Jersey and was willing to do a recycling day, and take things from the school – some minor advantages. We couldn’t get much of a reference and we have been comfortable with the working relationship with our current vendor. We would prefer to remain with them. Motion #18/19-197: Jonathan Hand moved to waive the purchasing policy and extend the Town of Coventry’s contract with Take Two for electronics recycling. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried on unanimous vote.

F. Town Manager – John Elsesser:
1. Projects Update:
   - The Recreation Department received an award from CIRMA for risk management in youth sports, along with a $2500 check. The money is going right back into the program for coaching and equipment. It was a source of pride to stand up at the CIRMA annual meeting and get this award. We also want to thank all of the youth sports leaders – it was lots of work for them, with background checks, concussion training, and a long list of other requirements. The parents should be pleased. There are always risks in sports but we seek to minimize them. Matthew said to please express our gratitude for their efforts.
   - John attended the reception for the visitors from China who are here as part of the exchange program. They gave the town various pieces of art which we are told mean “Good Luck.” The program generates a lot of good memories and good will. We still have contacts with Coventry England. John was on BBC radio last week to be interviewed regarding the selection of a new flag for Coventry England, which we will fly in front of Town Hall. The flag chosen by Coventry England is a representation of Lady Godiva riding a horse. It is not too provocative and we will plan to display it, take a video and send it back. When he was asked by the BBC why people would want to come here, he mentioned our rural character, the lake, the farmers market, and our proximity to New York and Boston.
   - BSC is finally wrapping up the Hale Greenway Trail. A phone conference is imminent. We are working toward a well-worn trail vs. a highway. We will be scheduling a second public forum. We have a list of abutters and will begin one-on-one meetings.
• The Police radio MOU was signed and we think we will be operational by the end of April. The State DSPP has been very cooperative and helpful. There are rumors that the Governor’s budget, when it comes out on February 20th, will ask State agencies to come up with $500 million in cuts. We anticipate that Town Aid will be part of that, and teachers’ pension too. No matter who was elected Governor, this was coming. A day of reckoning is due. Revenues are strong but they are looking at fiscal stability restraints. There is about $400 million from last year they can carry forward. At the COST annual town meeting it was suggested it might be wise to use those funds to pay down the pension fund liability. That was a good suggestion but then it won’t be available for other purposes. We will know on 2/20.

• The Jones Crossing Bridge replacement project is going out to bid with an opening on 2/28. Matthew O’Brien asked if we will be fixing the rest of the road from Rt. 195 to Timber Trail. John replied yes. The project will be done in two phases. We will wait until the road is closed to do most of that work. We will mill and pave from the section where the other work was done. We don’t want to have seams so we will bid it out as a whole, and use State contractors to pave up to the bridge. We will put binder down and when the project is all done do an overlay on the entire area. The intersection will be better – the angle will be straightened out. Amanda will be talking to the bonding company about getting in for July. They didn’t raise our rates last week so we want to get in.

• Sixty-six households in Coventry were tested under the concrete program. The good news is that half did not have it. Matthew O’Brien asked if they had visual reasons to be concerned. John replied that the bottom line is if you want to sell a house you will have to have it done. Matthew asked about the $3 million in lost revenue. John replied that is for assessed value. We are better off than Tolland or Vernon with all of their condo complexes that are affected.

F.3. Coventry ISO rating: The ISO acronym stands for Insurance Service Organization. This rating is what is used as a basis to determine what homeowners pay for insurance. We undertook an active campaign several years ago to improve Coventry’s rating. We were at a rating of 9-10 and those are the highest. We got us down to a 5 which is about a 40% savings on health insurance. A 5Y means the structure is not within a certain distance of a firehouse or fire pond. When people ask why we have so many fire stations, they were strategically located with homeowners’ insurance costs in mind. Insurance companies often don’t get the rating information right. For a rural town, a 5/5Y rating is very good. We were happy with the reaffirmation – they toughened the standards and we were afraid it was going to go up.

F.4. Ecosystem Consulting Service – Coventry Lake 2018 report: There is a lot of good information from Dr. Kortmann in this report about water clarity, and other issues. There was also concern about Cyanobacteria levels in October – which was very unusual. Lake turnover was very late this year. We are hoping it was a combination of the hot September/October weather combined with all the rain. We don’t think it is connected to the Hydrilla treatment. We are still waiting for that report but they have already told us they will be recommending continued treatment. We will have to work that into the budget. We have already met with Rep. Ackert who has a proposed bill in. We are trying to find a permanent funding source. It could be a fee on boat registrations or a clean lake stamp. We also mentioned the Community Investment Act - funds have been swept the past couple of years but could be appropriate for this purpose.

F.5. Selection of Program Administrator, 2019 CDBG program: We go out to bid for consulting services for this program. We received only one proposal. Other firms know Community Consulting has done a good job and probably didn’t want to compete. We also provided an overview of funds we have gotten through this program over the years – which totals up to $4.4 million. At the next Council meeting there will be a public hearing and some motions to make on the application. The funding pool might be larger so we might go for a larger amount.
We have to meet spending thresholds and we did that with the re-roofing and concrete testing program.

**F.6. 2018 Grand List totals:** This is not a lot of new money but it is better than some years. Matthew O’Brien asked to verify that this does not include motor vehicles. John said that is correct. That is tracked separately and was $100,000 more than budgeted. The State is talking about setting a statewide mil rate of 19 for cars. We will have to keep our eyes open.

**F.7. COST 2019 legislative priorities:** If the Council doesn’t agree with some of these, let John know. We think they represent a lot of smaller town issues.

8. **New Business:**
   A. **Consideration/Possible Action: Acceptance Right of Way Easement, Gannon Subdivision on Daly Road/Bellevue:**
   John Elsesser said there were three actions needed last time and we only did two. *Motion #18/19-198: Jonathan Hand moved and Mike Sobol seconded to accept the right of way easement for the Gannon subdivision on Daly Road/Bellevue. The motion carried on unanimous vote.*

   B. **18/19-46: Consideration/Possible Action: Appropriation of up to $115,500 from CNREF for Engineering Services for Folly Lane Bridge Project:**
   *Motion #18/19-199: Matthew O’Brien moved and Jonathan Hand seconded to authorize an appropriation of up to $115,000 from the Capital Non-recurring Expenditures Fund for engineering services for the Folly Lane Bridge project.* Matthew said he was pleased it wasn’t $150,000 as previously thought. John said we shared the spec sheet to show the range - with engineering we don’t just want to go with the low bid. We did a qualitative rating system and then brought in the three lowest bidders for discussions because we thought we could work with any of them. Cardinal Engineering was very cognizant of issues working near a golf course. Matthew asked what the current balance of CNREF is. Amanda Backhaus replied $308,000. *Motion #18/19-199 carried on unanimous vote.*

   C. **18/19-47: Consideration/Possible Action: Designation of Remaining Section of Bear Swamp Road as a Recreational Right-of-Way:**
   *Motion #18/19-200: Jonathan Hand moved and Carolyn Arabolos seconded to designate the remaining section of Bear Swamp as outlined as a recreational right-of-way.* John Elsesser noted that the Council would be adopting a resolution. He showed Bear Swamp on a map. It is an old road that went from Nathan Hale forest to Andover. At the Andover end it is paved. It cuts through Nathan Hale forest. The town attorneys did a title search at the request of CT DEEP. The road was never abandoned. It was affirmed in 1925. It is important because also off of this road is another road called Judd’s Lane. Judd’s Lane goes from Bear Swamp to Bunker Hill. If we wanted to connect the pathway that comes from Bolton Notch we could go through Bear Swamp or Hop River to connect to the Rails to Trails to the East Coast Greenway. It would create a loop where you can get to the Rails to Trails. A lot of people who bike and walk don’t like to backtrack so creating loops is a good thing. Traffic volume is low. We wouldn’t have to cut through open space. Matthew O’Brien asked if we are obligated to do anything else such as maintenance. John replied there has been no maintenance since 1976. He would think at some point we would like to apply for a trails grant to grade it. We haven’t had time to go and walk it.

   Lisa Conant read the following for the record:

   **WHEREAS,** on February 25, 1925 the Town of Coventry, in a special town meeting, declared that the portion of Bear Swamp Road, also known from time to time as Judd’s Lane, running
"from entrance of road near Frank Elmore" to the main north-south Bear Swamp Road was made a so-called pent road; and

WHEREAS, the remaining section of Bear Swamp Road was declared to be a recreational right of way by the special town meeting on January 29, 1976; and

WHEREAS, this section of Bear Swamp Road was inadvertently omitted from the town road classification actions taken at the January 29, 1976 special town meeting; and

WHEREAS, as a result of that inadvertent omission, the official status of this section of Bear Swamp Road has never been modified by the Town of Coventry since February 25, 1925; and

WHEREAS, the Town believes that this portion of Bear Swamp Road could serve a valuable public purpose as recreational access from Bunker Hill Road to the other section of Bear Swamp Road and to public properties located thereon.

Now; THEREFORE, the Town Council hereby resolves that the remaining section of Bear Swamp Road running northwesterly from Bunker Hill Road to Bear Swamp Road be designated as a recreational right-of-way.

Motion #18/19-200 carried on unanimous vote.

D. 18/19-48; Consideration/Possible Action: Establishment of Policy for Naming of Town-Owned Property and Features:
Motion #18/19-201: Carolyn Arabolos moved and Jonathan Hand seconded to establish a policy for naming of Town-owned property and features as presented. Carolyn said she thought the policy was very thorough and well written. Matthew O’Brien said under section two, naming process, at the first paragraph toward the end that says “biographical outline of individual,” he thinks it might be helpful to state a reason for the bio. It might not always be named after a person and then you wouldn’t need a bio. He suggested adding “And, if appropriate, a biographical outline.” Carolyn and Jonathan accepted this suggestion as a friendly amendment to their motions. Joan Lewis said a lot of work went into this over several meetings. It is an important policy. Motion #18/19-201 carried on unanimous vote.

F. 18/19-49: Discussion: Resolution for Tax Deferment for Federal Employees Affected by Government Shutdown: John Elsesser said he was asked to clarify some items, one being if this resolution would apply if the shutdown happens again. The answer was no. Matthew O’Brien asked if there have been any inquiries to the tax office. John said no. Joan Lewis noted this wouldn’t be to relieve the tax, only the interest. Matthew said it would be a very small subset of those – because most already have escrowed their taxes. He asked if there are any procedures in place for persons experiencing financial hardship to ask for a waiver. John replied there are no provisions in State law. Carolyn Arabolos asked if this is a moot point since the shutdown has ended. John said we don’t know. The tax office hasn’t been contacted but we can’t rule it out. Motion #18/19-202: Jonathan Hand moved and Carolyn Arabolos seconded to adopt the resolution for tax deferment for federal employees affected by the Government shutdown as presented. The motion carried with Arabolos, Conant, Hand and Lewis in favor; and Blanchard, O’Brien, and Sobol abstaining. Mike Sobol said he thinks this is a great idea; he just doesn’t think it is necessary at this point.

F. 18/19-50: Consideration/Possible Action: Appropriation From Open Space Fund of $85,000 for Acquisition of Rose Property on Cooper Lane and Call to Special Town Meeting on
February 28, 2019:
Motion #18/19-203: Lisa Conant moved the following resolution:

RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THE PURCHASE OF 254 COOPER LANE FOR OPEN SPACE AND THE CALLING OF A SPECIAL TOWN MEETING TO CONSIDER SAID PURCHASE FROM SUSAN ROSE HARRIGAN FOR $85,000.00.

RESOLVED, that the Coventry Town Council recommends to a Special Town Meeting, convened pursuant to Section 9-3(a) of the Town Charter, the approval of the purchase of 254 Cooper Lane for open space from Susan Rose Harrigan for $85,000.00. The purchase shall not be made until the same has been voted by the Town at a Special Town Meeting called for such purpose.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that a SPECIAL TOWN MEETING of the Electors and Citizens qualified to vote at Town Meetings of the Town of Coventry will be held at the Patriots Park Lodge, 172 Lake Street, Coventry, Connecticut on February 28 2019 at 7:00 p.m. for a vote on the following question:

Shall the Town of Coventry approve the purchase of 254 Cooper Lane for open space from Susan Rose Harrigan for $85,000.00?

Carolyn Arabolos seconded the motion.

John Elsesser said this is a contiguous piece of land that ties into the Williams open space parcel and land owned by Joshua’s Trust. We had an appraisal done and this cost is a little below market. It is higher than originally thought but it is a good deal. There is enough money in the open space fund. This acquisition has been endorsed by the Conservation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission. The meeting date would be right before the consortium meeting at the lodge to keep night meetings to a minimum. Motion #18/19-203 carried with Arabolos, Blanchard, Conant, Hand, Lewis, and O’Brien in favor; and Sobol abstaining. Mike Sobol said it is a unique opportunity but he doesn’t think we need to be spending money on property right now.

G. 18/19-51: Consideration/Possible Action: Authorization for Town Manager to Execute Agreement for Professional Services Between the Town of Bolton and Town of Coventry for Supplemental Building Inspection Services:

John Elsesser said when Noel Waite retired we lost our back-up coverage for Joe Callahan, the building official. We have emergency coverage when Joe is away but we got complaints about waiting time for inspections when he was away on vacation. When Joe was hired we had two building officials and a sanitarian. When Joe gets backlogged he cannot get plan reviews done. He needs office time in addition to inspection time. This is a good effort at regionalism. Carolyn Arabolos agreed that it is a good example of regionalism but asked if it is enough to support him. She is concerned about succession planning. John said when Joe decides to retire we believe we will be able to attract a seasoned inspector. Matthew asked to verify that it is 14 hours a month. John replied that there is flexibility. Bolton will work with us on that. Joe is taking a vacation in February. We had arranged for emergency coverage but this would help with additional coverage. We would try to keep some time per week so that Joe has time to be in the office. That is where we get the most complaints - people waiting for permits. Regarding Carolyn’s question, he thinks we have to take the baby steps. Under the law we have 30 days to issue a building permit. We don’t take nearly that long. Other towns have a 10-day waiting period. There is a high expectation of service from our town. We could degrade service and still be compliant but we don’t want to do that. Motion #18/19-204: Matthew O’Brien moved to authorize the Town Manager to execute the agreement for professional services between the Town of Coventry and the Town of Bolton for Supplemental Building Inspection.
Services. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.

9. Executive Session:

Motion #18/19-205: Matthew O’Brien moved and Carolyn Arabolos seconded 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 with the following people in attendance: Town Council members, the Town Manager and the Finance Director. The motion carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #18/19-206: Matthew O’Brien moved and Carolyn Arabolos seconded that the Town Council enter into Executive Session at 8:34 PM pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(B)-discussion of strategy and negotiation with respect to pending claims and litigation to which the public agency or a member thereof, because of his conduct as a member of such agency is a party until such litigation claim has been finally adjudicated or otherwise settled with the following people in attendance: Town Council members, the Town Manager and the Finance Director. The motion carried on unanimous vote.

Executive Session commenced at 9:25 PM.

Motion #18/19-207: Carolyn Arabolos moved to leave Executive Session at 9:52 PM. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried on unanimous vote.

10. Adjournment:
Motion #18/19-208: Matthew O’Brien moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:53 PM. The motion was seconded by Carolyn Arabolos and carried on unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone
Town Council Clerk

Note: These minutes are not official until acted upon by the Town Council at its next regular meeting. Those meeting minutes will reflect approval or changes to these minutes.
Even though I am supportive of allowing the Board to bring tuition paying students into the district, as appropriate, I abstained on the vote on the MOA between the Board of Education and the Town Council because I did not have enough information to make an informed decision. In order to add some clarity and transparency to the agreement and the process, I am asking that the Town Council Finance Committee, who were involved in creating the MOA, provide answers to the following questions and bring the answers back to the Council.

1) It has been said (though not in the MOA) that an agreement to bring more than 10 students from another district into Coventry schools would require a different MOA between the Board and the Council. What, if any, limitations does the MOA place on the number of tuition paying students can be accepted into the district each year? What is the scope of this agreement?

2) What does “on a space available basis” mean? Does it refer to a spot in an existing class that has fewer students than allowed under the teacher’s union contracts? Please clarify.

3) How will tuition paying students impact Coventry’s reporting to the state?

4) Will the expenditure of tuition and fee payments, received from tuition paying students, impact Coventry’s MBR? ...Coventry’s NCEP? ...Coventry’s percentage of the final approved budget appropriation that our unassigned fund balance represents? (will the increase in spending be reflected in the final approved budget appropriation)

5) **If** spending on the tuition paying students does count towards Coventry’s MBR, will the receipt of the tuition and fees received have an impact in the year when they are received or only in the year when the funds are expended? It is noted that the special fund enables the accumulation of these funds beyond the year in which they are received.

6) **If** the MBR is affected, will the state allow Coventry to reduce our MBR if the policy changes and such tuition paying students are no longer brought into the district? Or will Coventry continue to have to operate under the higher MBR?

7) **If** spending on special education tuition paying students counts towards Coventry’s NCEP, how might that impact the Coventry’s LEA Cap (as per the excess cost special education report) for all of Coventry’s excess cost special education students? If the NCEP is impacted and it increases due to the addition of tuition paying special education students it could have an impact of how much Coventry taxpayers must pay for each of Coventry’s excess cost special education students for whom total costs reach the LEA Cap that would be in place without the impact of the tuition paying students’ costs.
8) Please explain how use of the fund for the payment of costs of service to tuition paying students will be identified versus the use of the fund to pay for other things unrelated to the provision of equipment or services to the tuition paying students.

9) How, if at all, will this agreement and actions under it, impact / be treated in Coventry’s budget presented to the taxpayers? How will taxpayers be able to determine that no additional costs are included in the Board’s and therefore the Town Council’s budget to pay for services for tuition paying students?

10) Has the differing costs of providing services to students at different grade levels been discussed as part of setting the tuition rates? For example, it is far more expensive to educate a high school student than a grammar school student. Is the calculated cost of a high school education in Coventry higher than the tuition to be charged (which is an average over all of the students)?

11) Please detail the steps that will be taken under this agreement to assure that Coventry taxpayers will, as has been stated, be held harmless (no additional costs to them) under this arrangement.

12) Will any expenses or revenues related to these tuition paying students be included in the Board’s Management Reports or other regular reporting?

13) What additional reporting will be given to the Town Council that will provide information about the numbers and grades of the tuition paying students within our system and how will their numbers be highlighted (if they appear) in the budget documents that the Board will provide to the Town Council? How will we ensure transparency to the public?

Matthew O’Brien
2-1-19
Sherman First Selectman Don Lowe eased his car around Wakeman Hill Road, counting the chevron road signs on the back-to-back curves.

"More signs," Lowe said, pointing out a group of four and another cluster of five immediately after. "They really let you know."

**Recommended Video**

There are 68 signs spread out over a mile of the road, marking curves in each direction as part of a new federal program to make rural roads safer.

The signs were installed just before the new year in many towns across the state with a $3.84 million federal grant. But it seems no one expected there to be quite so many.

Officials in Sherman, New Milford and Ridgefield are now trying to remove some of them, saying the number is excessive, especially in the bucolic areas. In New Milford there were 339 signs installed on 14 roads and Ridgefield now has 86 signs on two roads.

Although many residents and officials agree it's a good idea to make drivers aware of the curves, they have said there are just too many signs and some question whether some of the curves are sharp enough to warrant them.

**More Information**

Bethel: 24 signs on one road
Danbury: 203 signs on four roads

"It's really ruined the road," Lowe said, comparing the road to one found in a video game instead of a scenic part of Sherman.
The Department of Transportation spokesman said they worked with the towns to create the plans and the new signs would make dangerous roads safer.

But had 37 fatal crashes on rural roads in 2015, with more than half of them coming from people running off the road. The amount of accidents that happen on curves is overrepresented, said DOT spokesman Nursick.

"We'll do something to reduce that." Nursick said.

The DOT invested nearly $782,000 to install signs in 19 towns, including Bethel, Danbury, New Milford, Newtown, New Preston, Ridgefield, Sherman and others, for local roads that could use safety improvements to the state for approval. A plan was then created for what amount of treatments the town was comfortable with, such as markings on the road, approaching curves, and sharpness of curves.

"This includes the sharpness of the curve, shoulder width, where a car would go if it goes off the road, sight distance, how the things are set up," Nursick said.

Town officials then signed off on these, which is why Nursick said he's surprised by the backlash.

"It's somewhat disheartening that after all of that work and after the project was awarded that a town wants to modify the plans," he said. "These locations have been identified and a project designed to address a safety concern."

In both New Milford and Sherman, though, the current chief executives inherited the projects from their predecessors, although neither town official placed any blame on the previous administration.

George Kain, Ridgefield's police commissioner, surmised that the disconnect where the decision makers remained in place could simply be because the towns didn't realize the full extent of the project.

"It seems that there was, however, a communication problem in towns' understanding exactly what kind of — and how many — signs would be erected," said George Kain, Ridgefield's police commissioner. "The state was more than understanding and sensitive to our concerns."

He said the Ridgefield Police Commission agreed to the plan in 2017 when they were told a "high visibility sign" would be erected. He said they were unaware of the chevron signs until they were installed in December.

"I have personally viewed the signage on both roads and find it to be excessive," Kain said.

**Safety v. Scenery**

Maria Ferreira, a resident who has lived on Long Ridge Road in Danbury for 34 years, said she feels less safe driving on the road because of how reflective the signs are in the dark. Her relative up the street, who is in her 80s, said all of the signs confuse her.

"It's like there are lights on the road," she said.

She said there are some curves that need them, but it was a waste of money to put these signs here.

"This is supposed to be a scenic route," Ferreira said. "They should put those signs where they're really needed."

New Milford Mayor Pete Bass agreed, pointing to Bear Hill Road as an example.

"Definitely, a few signs are needed on it, but there's 52," he said. "To me it's the number of the signs impacting the roadway. Residents want it scenic too."

Both Lowe and Bass said they didn't know of serious accidents on these roads prior to the signs.

But Nursick called the project a preventative measure so that serious accidents don't happen. He also said there is no data that shows the retro-reflective signs are more dangerous. They actually make the roads safer because they allow you to see the curve at night, he said.
“These types of crashes have very serious consequences — fatalities or serious injuries," Nursick said. “The risk is there and the data shows the risk is there."

He compared it to getting a flu shot or vaccine to prevent an illness.

**Removing the signs**

Some towns are looking at ways to reduce the number of signs.

New Milford will have a meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesday in Town Hall to get public input on what they want before the installation is completed.

Ridgefield, Sherman and New Milford are also all considering reducing the speed limit in certain spots that would allow them to take some of the signs down.

Kain said they are working with the state and the town's attorneys to determine what can be done. Any changes will have to wait until the spring when the project is completed.

"Once we are clear on how to proceed, and providing we follow all proper procedures, we will begin taking steps to eventually remove most, if not all, of the signs," he said. "Some of the signs may remain because they simply make sense, but they would be few in comparison to what we have now."

Nursick said there is some flexibility to reduce the number of signs and the state is working with the towns on it.

"We'll be as flexible as we can to a certain point," he said.

He said it's important to remember that the signs might seem excessive to a local who drives those roads every day but are needed and appropriate for someone new to the area or a new driver. He said the signs might be especially helpful for those drivers in poor weather and visibility conditions.

"It's not just for the locals," Nursick said. "It's for people not familiar with the roads and who have never driven them."