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

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

2. **Acceptance of Minutes:**
   Joan Lewis moved to accept the minutes of the Steering Committee meeting on January 28, 2019, seconded by Matthew O’Brien. The following corrections were requested:
   - Page two, fourth paragraph: Move third sentence, “There are some options…” to the third line after the sentence that ends with “another matter.”
   - Page four, item A.1., sixth line: change “Jonathan said we are…” to “Jonathan said that Matt is…”
   - Page four, item A.6., second to last line: add the words “and any taxation” after “against the Library…”
   - Page five, item A.8., fifth line: change “Mr. Twerdy looks like…” to “Mr. Twerdy has shown he is…”
   - Page six, item A.9., fifth line: after the sentence “… initial expansion to the Library” add the following: “Matthew O’Brien asked if that was 31 years ago and Joan said yes.”
   - Page five, last paragraph, fifth line: revise the sentence to read, “…candidate he has responsibilities that are of larger importance to our town.”
   - Page six, item 10, fifth line: after “…a few days’ notice”, add a sentence that reads, “Jonathan Hand also would be able to attend.”

   The motion to accept the minutes as corrected carried on unanimous vote.

3. **Reports:**

   **A. Committee Chair – Jonathan Hand:** Jonathan acknowledged Julie Blanchard’s absence at the meeting and said he is very discouraged that this Council person is playing politics with a vital Town resource by missing this meeting in protest. He would like to make a point that he had heard from other members of the Town Council earlier about how very important it is to show up at the meetings for which you were elected to serve.

   **B. Committee Members:**
   Matthew O’Brien said there was a hearing today at the State about the horizontal curve warning signs. There was a proposal to enable towns to have the option to remove some of the signs or make some changes. He doesn’t know how it went, but a Coventry resident who is opposed to the initiative was present at the hearing and spoke about his concerns. Rep. Ackert was also present. John Elsesser said it is difficult to get the State to accept liability. Matthew’s understanding is if we were to remove the signs, then the liability would be on us.

   Joan Lewis said she is not sure we can resolve this, but she has heard there is trouble again with residents of the group home on Dunn Road. John Elsesser said a car was stolen, and the police know who did it and made two arrests. If there were other neighborhood thefts that were reported, it would need to be proven in order to attribute them to the group home. Joan said that a resident has asked to address the Council about her concerns. She knows at one point we had
managed to have an age limit but that was removed. John said it used to be 13 but he believes it goes up to 18 now. We have had multiple meetings with the Department of Children and Families and the contractor who runs the home. The issue is not unique to this group home or to Coventry. We understand the impact to the neighbors. Generally, the solution is that the most troubled youth are transferred to another town, but then they send someone else in and the problems begin again. The issue is they have closed the State juvenile hall, so there is nothing that can be done with these kids. Joan said it wouldn’t hurt to bring it up again. The police time and ambulance calls are astronomical. Matthew O’Brien asked if things can be changed. John replied it would require a change to State laws. It is a State policy to decentralize these kids and put them in school settings where they have a chance to succeed. Our options are limited but staying silent is not a good idea either. People also should not leave their keys in their cars. There are people not associated with these group homes who are coming in to town and stealing. The punishment under age 21 is minimal. Joan said she thinks we should raise the issue again with the State. Matthew agreed and offered to be involved in meetings if they are scheduled. He asked if we pay for their education when they come here. John said yes. It is the State’s way of saving money. Jonathan said it is important to note that these things could be done by youth who grow up in town, too.

C. Review/Discussion: Vacancy and Member Reports: No discussion.

4. Resignations/Not Wishing to be Reappointed:
A. Harvey Barrette’s resignation from the Veterans’ Memorial commission was acknowledged with regret and thanks for his service. Joan Lewis said we will probably bring Harvey in to a Council meeting later in the spring to acknowledge his many years of service.

5. Reappointments:
A. Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the reappointment of Michelle Pesce to the Ad-hoc Farmers Market Operating Committee, term to expire 11/2/2021. The motion was seconded by Joan Lewis and carried on unanimous vote.

B. Matthew O’Brien said he was asked to speak to Sam Belsito regarding his commitment to serve on the Economic Development Commission. Mr. Belsito indicated that he is still very much interested in serving. He occasionally has work conflicts, but always lets the Chair know when he is unable to attend. **Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the reappointment of Sam Belsito to the Economic Development Commission, term to expire 2/1/2024. The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien and carried on unanimous vote.**

6. Appointments:
A. **Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the appointment of Mark Tomaszewsky from an alternate to a full member of the School Energy and Building Efficiency Building Committee to fill the Trudon seat for the duration of the committee’s work, seconded by Joan Lewis.** John Elsesser said he went to the last meeting of this committee and Mr. Tomaszewsky was there. He has 13 years of HVAC experience and is a master electrician. Also, the company he works for specializes in school installations. **The motion carried on unanimous vote.**

B. **Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the appointment of Joseph Malon as an alternate to the School Energy and Building Efficiency Building Committee for the duration of the committee’s work, seconded by Joan Lewis.** Jonathan noted that Mr. Malon’s experience with elevators is relevant to this committee’s work. **The motion carried on unanimous vote.**
7. **Consideration/Possible Action: Acceptance of Avery Shores in Gerald Park Association:**  
John Elsesser shared a letter from the Association that we received today, indicating that Attorney Stephen Penny has not been retained to represent the Association in this matter, as was originally conveyed to Town Attorney Rich Roberts. Based on that, John will reach out and see who Attorney Roberts should talk with, if not Attorney Penny. John will let the Association know we would like to move to the next step. Matthew said yes, if they are interested. John said it appears they have taken some positive steps, such as doing some tree work. Matthew said he liked the approach we discussed of doing a circuitous route that can be worked on. John will send an email to the Association and make sure they have Rich Roberts’ contact information.

8. **Employee and volunteer recognition:**  
Police Department employees with 15 or more years of service will be recognized on March 27th at 3:45 PM at the police station. We do not have a response from public works yet about a date that will work for them. Joan Lewis said that she got some more information on Eric Ohlund’s service on the Veterans’ Memorial Commission. She also wants to talk with Sandy Sanborn’s wife. Matthew O’Brien asked if we should recognize Ray Giglio. John Elsesser said he thinks we did that a few months ago. We will double check.

9. **Adjournment:**  
The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 PM on a motion by Matthew O’Brien, seconded by Joan Lewis and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone  
Town Council Clerk