MINUTES
COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL
MARCH 2, 2020
TOWN HALL ANNEX

Public Hearing, 7:15 p.m.
Repeal of Ordinance No. 125 Establishing the Coventry Insurance Advisory Committee

Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m.

1. **Public Hearing, Repeal of Ordinance No. 125 Establishing The Coventry Insurance Advisory Committee**
   Blanchard opened the public hearing at 7:15 p.m.

   Elsesser stated one of the Council’s goals is cleaning up sections of the ordinances. It has been difficult to recruit for this committee. Coventry is now in with other towns to create an insurance pool. The committee selected an agent and the coverage levels. It dates back many years when Coventry did not have a finance office. We can use the talents and abilities of the volunteers elsewhere.

   Audience of Citizens:
   There were no speakers.

   Blanchard closed the public hearing at 7:19 p.m.

2. **Regular Council Meeting, 7:30 P.M.**

3. **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

   Members absent:

   Also present: John Elsesser – Town Manager

4. **Pledge Of Allegiance:**
   Council members and Staff stood to recite the pledge.

5. **Audience Of Citizens:**
   (30 minutes – 5 minutes maximum per citizen)
Howard Haberern, 80 Cassidy Hill Road – He is asking for a third time for Blanchard to appoint a Council member to address his concern that affects for all Democrats. Haberern’s statement and formal request for the appointment of a Council member to address his concern is attached.

Blanchard asked Williams if he would address this matter. Williams agreed to do so. He will contact O’Brien, Jr. and he may want to speak to Mr. Haberern. Williams will be in contact.

Jennifer Burdette, Bear Swamp Road, Andover – She spoke to the Town Manager about the process for filing a formal complaint against the Chief of Police. As suggested, Burdette prepared a letter of complaint that she read at the meeting. The letter was handed to John Elsesser when she concluded. Her statement and a copy of the letter are attached.

Carol Chipkin, 454 Cassidy Hill Road – She is here to speak about the Booth & Dimock Library. In 2013 the Suffield Library began a $2.4 million expansion. The cost of construction then went to $3.9 million. After a series of issues the library opened in 2019 at a cost of $6 million. And this is not the only library expansion or renovation this has happened to. Chipkin read through results of the Library Renovation team meetings that listed 34 items it wishes to accomplish. You are asking us to spend $2.4 million on the library that in the end will have a new roof, new windows, walls, floor, and floor joists. You still don’t know if you will have a legitimate problem. The problem may go on. All of the expenditures are going to leave Coventry with a small facility with little parking and a large tax increase.

Joan Lewis, 48 Antrim Road – She reviewed the presentation for the library and is here to speak in support of the project. There has been no major work on the library in 30 years and items need to be addressed. Lewis likes the idea of moving the elevator to the front of the building. Ms. Lewis thanked the committee for their diligence, vision, and of being mindful of the costs. Many of the members of the Committee are in construction and trades. She visits the library frequently and sees the computers in use and programs being run for young people. The library contributes much to citizens of all ages. The project has an $850,000 matching grant from the State Library. There is a time limit for the grant money. This proposal is a reduction of $3 million from the previous presentation. Ms. Lewis is hoping the Council views this project with an open mind and knows the need that it can go forward with a referendum set before the end of the grant period.

Kathleen Ryan, 18 Maryann Drive – She is in support of the new proposal for the renovation of the library. Ryan thanked the committee for addressing the concerns about the building. Coventry has responsibilities for its properties. The recommendations are structural in nature and need remediation. When she viewed the presentation online she was impressed by the usage numbers. Two-thirds of citizens in Coventry have a Booth and Dimock library card. The usage exceeds state and national statistics. This project will make the facility impressive for ongoing years.

This portion of the meeting was closed by Blanchard.

Motion: I move that agenda item 10.A. be the next order of business.
By: O’Brien, Sr. \hspace{300pt} Seconded: Hand

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

6. **Acceptance Of Minutes:**
**February 18, 2020**
**Motion:** I move to accept the minutes of the February 18, 2020 meeting.

By: Hand \hspace{300pt} Seconded: O’Brien, Sr.

Discussion:
With the following corrections:
- Page 2, Simon comments, last sentence – remove the “‘s” from Simon.
- Page 4, item 8.A., 2nd paragraph – change third sentence to read “The password of the Republican Registrar for the State website has been locked out.” And last sentence changes to “O’Brien, Jr. will meet with the Republican registrar.”.
- Page 4, item 8.B. – change all instances “Depaola” to “DePaola”.
- Page 4 item 8.B, last paragraph – change “1:00” to “2:00”.
- Page 5, item 8.F.1., bullet six – add a comma after “sold”.
- Page 6, first paragraph – change all instances of “bentic” to “benthic” and “barrier” to “barriers”.
- Page 6, item 8.F.4. – add Blanchard to the list of those attending the meeting.
- Page 7, item 10.A. – change “junked” to “junk”.
- Page 8, item 10.E. – change “Hilgh3rl” to “Hill”; change “contaminates” to “contaminants”; change “PW” to “DPW”; change “Stockpiles” to “The stockpile”; remove “n” and spaces after “term,”.

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

7. **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: Conant \hspace{300pt} Seconded: Hand

Discussion: O’Brien, Sr. asked that item 8.D. be removed from the consent agenda.

Voting:
For: O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Conant, Thomas, Williams
8. **Reports:**

8.A. **Council Chairwoman: Julie A. Blanchard**
Blanchard reported the budget meetings have been scheduled. These will be starting at 7:00. It was discussed that Steering meet at 6:15 p.m. on March 23, 2020. Conant stated she may arrive late.

8.B. **Council Members:**
Thomas read the PZC Minutes of the February 10, 2020 meeting. An idea being discussed for a new business in town is an archery course and training facility at the Knights of Columbus building on Snake Hill Road. William Hall is expressing interest in bringing this to Coventry. Steering has been asked to find places for bow hunters so there is definite interest in the community, although is not for hunting but training and target practice. Thomas feels this type of business will fit well in a rural community and be low impact. Thomas wanted to call this to the Council’s attention. Elsesser added the Hall family owns Hall’s Archery on West Middle Turnpike in Manchester. Eric Trott is working with Mr. Hall. The building was a place of assembly. Staff is working to make this fit as it feels like something that belongs out here.

Conant stated she was mistaken when mentioning at the last meeting the date of last Winter Farmer’s Market. Another market day was added because a couple of scheduled markets were cancelled due to plowing issues. The last market took place this past Sunday.

Conant read the memo that was included in the packet about Women’s Suffrage into the record. Posters are hanging in the hallway of Town Hall.

O’Brien, Sr. stated there will be a ceremony at the Vietnam Memorial on March 29, 2020 from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. with light refreshments at the Lodge afterwards.

8.C. **Steering Committee: Matthew O’Brien, Jr., Chairperson**
O’Brien, Jr. reported the committee received an extensive number of documents from Elsesser regarding police department policies and procedures. It will take some time to work through these.

8.C.1. **Reappointments**

8.C.1.a. **Economic Development Commission: Liptrap**

**Motion:** I move that the Council reappoints Timothy Liptrap to the Economic Development Commission; term to expire 2/1/2025.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Hand

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

8.C.1.b. **Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Advisory Committee:** Reilly
Motion: I move that the Council reappoints Jennifer Reilly to the Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Advisory Committee; term to expire 3/1/2023.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Conant

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

8.C.1.c. Pension & Retirement Board: Murzyn
Motion: I move that the Council reappoints Robert Murzyn to the Pension & Retirement Board; term to expire 1/1/2023.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Hand

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

8.C.2. Appointments
8.C.2.a. Ad Hoc Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee: Choate
Motion: I move that the Council appoint Suzanne Choate to the Ad Hoc Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee; term to expire 8/1/2020.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Conant

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

8.C.2.b. Ad Hoc Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee: Imhoff
Motion: I move that the Council appoint Carly Imhoff to the Ad Hoc Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee; term to expire 8/1/2020.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Hand

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

8.C.2.c. Inland Wetlands Agency Alt: Choate
Motion: I move that the Council appoint Suzanne Choate as the Inland Wetlands Agency Alternate; term to expire 9/15/2022.

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

8.C.2.d. Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee Council Representative: Brand

Motion: I move that the Council appoint Richard Brand to the Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee as the Council Representative; term for the life of the Committee.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Williams

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

8.C.2.e. Zoning Board of Appeals: Gerrity, M.
Hand pointed out the agenda does not indicate this is for the position of Alternate.

Motion: I move that the Council appoint Michael Gerrity fill the elected position of Zoning Board of Appeals as an Alternate; term to expire 11/2/2021.

By: O’Brien, Jr. Seconded: Hand

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

Thomas asked if someone stepped down from this position. O’Brien, Jr. replied the position was vacant. Hand stated this is an elected position and nobody ran for it at the last election. One meeting was postponed due to alternates not being available.

Blanchard reported Steering had a very busy meeting. There are so many volunteers, so many qualified people. It is exciting and they come with many skills. Hand added that Mr. Gerrity is qualified for a certain high electrician work that may be of use on other committees. O’Brien, Jr. stated these are highly qualified people that are passionate about serving.


8.D. *Finance Committee: Matthew O’Brien, Sr., Chairperson
O’Brien, Sr. stated with interests rates going down we should investigate opportunities for refinancing debt. Now would be a good time to justify the cost of doing so if there is enough time left on the loan. O’Brien, Sr. believes the rates will be down again shortly.

Williams stated this may be complicated if the loan has a fixed rate for a certain period of time. We may have to stay at those rates for a number of years. We checked last year to see if anything was callable. Each project is bonded differently. For the first five years these are not callable. Backhaus will investigate some of the older ones.

8.E. *COVRAA – John A. Elsesser:

8.F. Town Manager – John A. Elsesser
8.F.1. Projects Update

- Wendy Rubin is contacting groups that use the lake to try and coordinate an event calendar. Last year there was a use conflict. Rubin is also looking to formalize and enhance some of the lake events, such as the July 4th boat parade and waterski show. The sailing club would like to install a wind meter. UConn is willing to share an AED.

- There are projects that won’t get done since the discussion of tolls went away unless towns scream bloody murder. Roads prepped last year won’t get resealed, the shimming of roads and chip sealing is pushed off, 20 miles of roads due to be crack sealed won’t be done which means they fall apart more. People are urges to contact our State Representatives.

- LOTCIP grants have been obtained for drainage projects on Lancaster and Twin Hills.

- The Folly Lane bridge replacement is moving along. The design is being tweaked to get the drainage from one side to the other without having to obtain an easement through a property owner’s mortgage company. December is being mentioned when the project will be finished. We don’t want the bridge closed over the winter.

Hand requested an update on the girls’ softball fields. He went to the softball clinic held recently at the High School and it was very well attended. Elsesser has given the draft prices to the Town Engineer to review for locating at the football field or the transfer station or WPCA. The draft prices are three times higher than expected. The football field location was more than $400,000 for two fields. This location would require grading and top soil. Elsesser wants the Town Engineer to review so Elsesser can feel these are real, though stunning, numbers.

Blanchard mentioned that 135 households have or are undergoing crumbling foundation testing under CRCOG. Elsesser said this number is up to 145 households. The report is provided monthly. How many have been determined to have crumbling foundations?

Conant asked what we are doing to being able to respond to Coronavirus. Elsesser replied he did get a little nervous last week. A higher-level meeting will be held next week with the Director of Health in attendance; all emergency management services will be at the table at the same time. Elsesser spoke to Robin Miller who assured him there is no need to panic and face masks are not needed. The first concern is the safety
of EMS personnel. Elsesser has given Jim McLoughlin a directive to limit the number of people responding to a patient to two to three at one time. This limits exposure for our emergency services personnel. The reality is the indications are that this is a flu like any other. We grew up without having flu shots being available. Information was shared from the Health District on the Facebook page. Distance learning is being talked about at UCONN. We don’t have this resource locally. The issue is what will be counted as a school day. This is moving and evolving. We are taking this seriously while putting it in perspective. With underlying medical issues the virus can be fatal. Conant agreed public education is important. If you are ill work from home. The seriousness goes up as you age or if your immune system is compromised. There is a lot of misinformation out there. Elsesser replied this is not a China bio weapon. This virus could have less impact than the annual flu. Take precautions – don’t be touching your face, keep your hands clean, stay home. Eighty-eight people from UCONN have been called back from Italy. They have been asked to self-isolate in their homes. Coventry is receiving updates from the CDC through the Health District. The Health District is the entity that can impose quarantines.

8.F.2. Microgrid/Co-generation Update
The company does have a firm financing commitment from one firm; they are pushing to obtain offers from two other firms. They are ready to sign the request for PURA to align the meters. This will be one point to see where and how much power is being generated. We need to know how much each building uses. The Housing Authority will have to sign the agreement also. They are being approached to choose one of the existing members to be the representative.

Elsesser is asking for guidance on this matter because of the timeliness needed: CLCC wants to do housing and farming on the property and have obtained the permits needed. The representatives have found a grant from the USDA for $50,000 up to $200,000 to build a facility for disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. If they collaborate with the Town they gain credibility on the grant application. CLCC envisions building a series of barns and housing. The deadline for submittal is March 19, 2020. Conant opined they would need UCONN Extension buy-in to give them credibility. As long as it is clear we are not giving CLCC any money Elsesser does not see any downside. Elsesser is asking if he can write a letter in support of the application if proof is obtained there is no financial commitment from the Town. This is a good way to show support of CLCC.

The Council was in consensus in giving the Town Manager discretion to write a letter in support of the USDA grant application by CLCC with no obligation on the part of the Council or the Town.

8.F.3. Quarterly Reports: October-December, 2019

9. Unfinished Business:
None

10. New Business:
10.A. 19.20-52: Library Renovation & Building Committee: Update Presentation (7:45 p.m.)

Those present are:
Deborah Walsh, Chairman
Joe Damkowski, Board of Trustees to the Library
John Twerdy who is on many building committees
Tim Ackert, electrician and our State Representative
Dudley Brand, a teacher at Windham Tech
Margaret Kahn, Librarian
Members not present:
Bill Bonney, Mechanical Engineer
Jim Porter, retired State Forester
Ken Beck, architect

John Elsesser attended all of the meetings of the committee which occurred every two weeks since last February.

Deborah Walsh presented using the PowerPoint presentation included in the packet. Many of the issues that need to be addressed are about water incursion. Part of the charge includes limiting the work within the existing footprint including the courtyard. It is up to the Council to determine funding and the phasing plan.

Many libraries in the area have gone through extensive renovations in the past few years. All across the state people are paying attention to their libraries. 97% of the Booth & Dimock Library budget is funded by the town of Coventry. The library has raised $16,000 over the past year. The 2019 statistics are notable in that you don’t have to have a library card to go into the library. 121,000 internet sessions have been hosted. 65% of the citizens of Coventry are library cardholders. The state median is 39%. The Booth & Dimock library exceeds circulation statistics in all categories. The library is aging and emergency repairs have been needed that have been addressed.

The drainage system was cameral in late 2019. There is nothing clogging the drain. The beehive is at the back of the property and does not have an exit; water seeps out which is standard. It is 9.5’ deep. The drainage line is working. The problem is ice damming and the courtyard floor has shifted. O’Brien, Sr. confirmed with Walsh that the drainage line slopes gently down to the beehive. The original 1913 building is stunning. The addition to this was constructed in 1989 with no major updates or renovations since then. Walsh was part of the committee during the addition. The carpeting and windows are original to the addition. There has been an amazing change in technology since 1989. The water incursion is from the courtyard, the leaking windows, and into the walls. There is no mold to be concerned with. There is a serious lack of space especially in the Community Room. That space can hold 75 people; the proposed plan would increase the size to allow for 100-110 people. Also, it is desired that the Community Room can be used even if the library is not open. The current layout is counter intuitive. The project proposal addresses issue in noncompliance. The architect provided the code violation list.

Water is coming into the lower door and the roof and scuppers. The problem is not only at the courtyard. Kahn reported there were two programs held in February where
parents were asked to exit the Community Room so capacity would not be over the allowable limit. Elsesser added the new Community Room would also have a sink that would help when craft activities are hosted and counter space for placing refreshments on. We would be using the courtyard area by covering it and the additional space allows the rearrangement of the interior. Under the proposed plan, birth to 22 years would be serviced downstairs. The drop-dead date for the $850,000 grant is November 23, 2020. This proposal needs to be brought to referendum. Walsh is concerned that the time is getting tight and does not want to lose the grant money. She urges the Council moves quickly to a decision.

Ackert continued the 1989 addition was well invested in because of the products used. However, the materials are at life expectancy. This proposal is a reduction of $150,000 from the original one. The overall cost to the Town is $1.55 million with the potential of having $100,00 from existing funding. This is a decrease of 56% from the original library expansion. The project address egress, railings, steps, and anything else that is not code compliant. Areas of rescue are needed. The basement door is too short for an emergency exit. Five restrooms are needed per code; four for the public and one for staff. There are currently two restrooms in the building. Other needed items are a chimney liner, drywall replacement, a new roof, new windows, an ADA compliant circulation desk, doors, electrical, shelving/furnishing, and ADA signage. The non-water issues have a cost estimate of $472,000; another $123,000 has been included for a total of $605,000. Water issues cost estimates are not know because an engineer would have to be consulted for that information. A stab at that cost is $30,000 - $40,000.

Walsh added the land donation by Ed LeDoyt of 1/3 acre behind the parking lot will help with water issues from the beehive. In addition, the PZC requested 8 – 10 more parking spaces. Mr. LeDoyt’s wonderful donation helps with this. IWA suggested a rain garden. The Committee is recommending the plan of the courtyard infill to take care of the water issue and the interior relocations.

Thomas mentioned that someone made the claim that the plan does not solve the water issues. Can you describe how it does? Walsh indicated the courtyard would be filled in or capped. The entrance will be moved. The existing ramp becomes the doorway into the library. The space is capped over the courtyard with a new roof and all windows being replaced. Storm water drainage will go into the same space. Elsesser reiterated a cap is being put over the whole courtyard area so water can’t get through. The drainage and beehive will be reused. The beehive may need to be vented out of the back if the water gets too high. The water would be directed through the back and eventually flow into the wetlands.

Williams asked how many places there are that have water coming in? Kahn answered there are six places where water comes in… from the roof, that is 31 years old, accounts for three places; the original section of the building has a slate roof and is not a problem, the doors suffer from water intrusion, and the windows weep water on the eastern side of the building. Are the drains being overwhelmed? Elsesser answered the water puddles and cannot reach the drains because ice dams stop water from getting to the drain. The windows and roof leak. During a normal rainstorm we do not necessarily see water coming in through the bottom of the doors. During extreme storms water may come in through the bottom of the doors.
O’Brien, Sr. asked if the Committee was not focused on adding space, is there a cheaper way to protect the building? Walsh replied the Committee feels this proposal is the most economical way of protecting the library. Correcting items piecemeal is costly and prolongs some of the issue. This proposal will solve issues for a long time. Kahn added that we have tried to interweave a solution to all issues per the charge. Twerdy commented this proposal is one of common sense. Much has been improved in town. We have a beautiful lake, a good school system, and we need a good library.

Damkowski stated the Library trustees have agreed to a transfer of ownership to the Town when the Certificate of Occupancy is issued once the proposal recommendations are made. The Board of Trustees will continue to operate the library.

Blanchard asked how we can get firm prices about the changes required for the water incursion? Elsesser replied Ken Best, architect, came up with these estimates and Down Construction has validate them. Down Construction has done a few library projects over the past few years and adjusted costs for inflation. We believe these cost estimates are true. Blanchard stated the desire would be to phase the construction so the library would not have to be moved out of the building as it was in 1989. Ken Best has included a phasing schedule for construction. There may be some periods when the building will have to be closed for 3 – 4 weeks. A pop-up library may happen that allows minimal library services. If this period happens outside of the school year could a school library be used? Books will not go into trailers like last time. We are attempting to minimize impacts. The final phase of moving books will be for the installation of the carpet. The shelves are moved with the books on them.

Conant asked what the cost would be if the code compliance is not addressed. Is this related to the cost to taxpayers that was alluded to as a big tax hike? Elsesser and Backhaus indicated in 2022 there will be a drop in debt so there would be no increases to the taxpayers for the library costs. Walsh added that we would not be able to use State money unless we are code compliant. As it is, someone can come after us for ADA violations. Elsesser commented the new elevators will be cheaper to maintain.

Williams stated we as a Council have stated in our goals under fiscal responsibility to redirect the library project. It has been decided not to spend this kind of money on this project. It is a contentious piece and has been going on for a number of years. The project was redirected with up to $850,000 of Town money being spent. This proposal exceeds that amount. Thomas disagreed with the goal. Walsh stated this proposal is for an additional $700,000. Elsesser added the Council did not recharge the Committee. O’Brien, Sr. stated we were hoping the numbers would come in better and decided to wait in recharging the Committee at Elsesser’s recommendation. O’Brien, Sr. thanked the committee for the work and they have done what was asked of them. Where we are and what we do next is the question. Ackert commented we need a design/build with professional plans done. However, we have confirmed the current numbers by two professional. The Committee took the outline given and looked at the best way to invest in this facility. O’Brien, Sr. stated the Council is committed to fixing the building and the Committee has worked within the scope of the project. Twerdy stated this has been a long fight.

Walsh asked about taking this to referendum. The answer was the Council has to decide on the plan of action first. O’Brien, Jr. feels the Committee is very comfortable this plan
will address the water intrusion and address all of the other elements. Conant stated they have worked within the existing footprint. Ken Best felt stripping off the old roof and putting a new roof on would reveal major flashing issues. The parapets are holding water. Removing the parapets would be structurally messing with the walls. We need an engineer to go forward with a plan to design the roofing structure. Twerdy added the State Library has been good in giving the $850,000. The people we first approached have retired. We don’t know how the new people will react.

O’Brien, Sr. confirmed this was an update from the Committee and they are not looking for funding approval tonight. Another option would be the Council comes back with a different number for the Committee to work within.

Blanchard thanked all for the time and dedication given.

   
   1. Booth & Dimock Memorial Library (8:00 p.m.)
   Margaret Kahn was present. The library had a great 2019 with an increase in circulation that is contrary to state-wide trends. Payroll is 76% of the budget; this is close to state levels. Minimum wage is going up; this is non-negotiable. She proposes maintaining wage gaps between staff members. Professional staff is woefully underpaid. Kahn is making it a priority that professional staff is compensated to industry standards. Benefits are under what you would expect them to be. O’Brien, Sr. commented it was difficult to find the right category that the library belonged to for benefits as most fall under municipalities. Elsesser wants to try to keep to a three-year commitment of raising pay. There has been staff turnover because of the underpayment. Williams asked what the professional salary percentage is? Kahn will provide that information. Kahn stated the library has sixteen employees with four being at minimum wage. O’Brien, Sr. asked if Kahn has considered changing the hours? Kahn replied she would like to increase the number of hours the library is open. Complaints have been heard about the library being closed on Monday. Part-timers account for 120 payroll hours and there are 120 hours for the full-time staff on a weekly basis. There is a requirement to have three people in the building at all times. Capital improvements include a HVAC software upgrade as the current system runs on Windows XP and is security prone. Computer upgrades account for $3,000 per year over the next five years. The computers are heavily used. Under a funding program from PC Richards we can get the equipment at cost. Replacement of the carpeting and repainted is needed as these are original components of the building. The carpeting is ripped in places and could pose a hazard. Bibliovation, an integrated library system serving 80 libraries in the state, will be used. Kahn was able to negotiate the yearly cost of $28,000 to $6,000. The library receives stipends for what we loan out.

Williams asked how the library is staffed? Kahn replied the library is open 43 hours per week with three staff members in the building at once comes to 120 hours per week. Professional staff is not included in the count of those in the building at any one time because there are many times when they are off-site. Professional staff run programs, the teen and children librarians go out to the schools and daycares, including the Hale Early Education Center, visit the Senior
Center, and do home deliveries. Kahn is often out at meetings. School visits account for 15 hours per month.

Blanchard mentioned the top line item of the salary increase of 3.95% going to be constant? Elsesser replied this will be constant or increasing. The increase is divided between July and January. Library Assistant’s with many years of service are at today’s minimum wage. It is untenable they are making minimum wage when these are the employees that make the library run. This will happen with other departments with pressure from the bottom. Part-time staff are hovering at what the future minimum wage is.

O’Brien, Jr. mentioned the $35,000 in CIP for carpeting and painting. This is a placeholder depending on the direction of the library renovation project. You won’t be paying for it twice.

Blanchard praised Kahn for being able to reduce the cost of Bibliomation. Are we certain the cost will not go up for three years? Kahn asked that question many, many times and was assured it would not. Training on the system is included. It was asked if there is a line item for buying books or subscriptions or ebooks? Kahn replied there is about $35,000 for those items as well as DVDs for adults, juveniles, and young adults.

O’Brien, Sr. thanked Kahn for how well prepared she was.

2. Grand List
Elsesser informed the Council the process used for the past four revaluations is to take a representative sample of neighborhoods to see the impact. The same areas have been used. The average is about a 4% increase in taxes using the same mil rate of 32.2. There is no significant growth. This is conservative and not overstating growth. O’Brien, Sr. added this is tempered by sixty-two homes on crumbling foundations and less state aid.

10.C. 19/20-53: Consideration/Possible Action: Repeal Of Ordinance No. 125
Establishing The Coventry Insurance Advisory Committee
Motion: I make the motion that the Coventry Town Council repeal Ordinance No. 125.
By: Thomas
Seconded: Hand

Discussion: The public hearing was held and there were no comments from audience members. This has been in discussion in Steering over the years. The Coventry Insurance Advisory Committee is no longer necessary.

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

10.D. 19/20-54: Consideration/Possible Action: Adoption Of Coventry Fire & EMS Proposed Interim Job Descriptions
Elsesser stated these job descriptions are evolving. The Transition team is proposing an interim state for a year with temporary appointments to be in place for July 1, 2020. In order for interested parties to submit a letter of intent and start the process of hiring for the temporary appointments, the job descriptions need to be approved.

O’Brien, Sr. asked if the person chosen for the interim period has to have all of the experience listed? Backhaus stated people would have a year to obtain the certifications and meet the experience requirements. O’Brien, Sr. replied this should be stated somewhere in the job descriptions. Hand feels with temporary appointments some people may need some time to get all of the experiences listed. Elsesser suggested the Council can kick this back to the Fire Transition team to add specific language for the interim period and then return the descriptions to the Council for possible action. O’Brien, Jr. commented that people may not apply if they feel their experience does not match as stated. There could be a statement as to the level one must be certified to be considered for the position and the period to obtain further certifications to do any one of these volunteer positions. This should be described somewhere in the job descriptions. Elsesser suggested if he can get a quick answer back from the Transition team approval could be obtained at the special budget meeting.

**Motion:** I move to table this item to the next meeting or until the special budget meeting.

By: Hand  
Seconded: O’Brien, Sr.

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

11. **MISCELLANEOUS/CORRESPONDENCE:**
   11.A. *Board of Education Minutes – 2-18-20*

12. **Executive Sessions:**  
**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 with the following people in attendance the seven Council members, Amanda Backhaus, Finance Director, and John Elsesser, Town Manager.

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

Voting:  
For: Hand, Conant, 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)(E)-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 Council members, Amanda Backhous, Finance Director, and John Elsesser, Town Manager.

By: O’Brien, Sr.  Seconded: Conant

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

The Council entered Executive Session at 10:49 p.m.

The Council exited Executive Session at 11:13 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT:
Motion: I move that the Council adjourns at 11:14 p.m.

By: O’Brien, Sr.  Seconded: Thomas
Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, 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.
March 2nd, 2020

Audience of citizens-Howard Haberern

This is the third time that I have asked for the Town Council Chairwomen, Julie Blanchard, to appoint a council member to address my concern which affects all Democrats in our town of Coventry.

I formally put in a written request for this to be on the next Council’s agenda at the last Council meeting. To date no action has been taken.

All Council members took the same oath and are charged with following their own rules and goals.

TRANSPARENCY is one of them! Section 2:10 under the Audience of Citizens is another.

It’s funny how the O’Brien’s used false misleading big red campaign signs to attack the Democrats last fall. They accused them of not being transparent.

Mr. O’Brien Senior has accused the Board of Education at times of not being transparent.

Why is it that Council Member O’Brien Jr. thinks that he doesn’t have to be transparent to Coventry citizens.

Mr. O’Brien Jr. is nothing but untransparent and is being protected by our Town Council’s Chairwomen, Julie Blanchard.

Some Yes, the Chairwomen who censored me with no respect to my Freedom of Speech rights.

Why are they afraid to address this required request? If they can’t follow their own rules, then it is time for them to resign.
You sure knew how to respond when it came time to attacking Mr. Oros and Mike Sobol, and it was disgusting and unprofessional.

The subject matter is, Does Town Council member, Matt O’Brien Junior still believe and support the statement that he made publicly at Creaser Park that

“all Democrats are Godless people who are compromised by the Devil.”

Coventry citizens deserve an answer and it is mandatory for the Town Council to address this.

I know for a fact that I pay more taxes that Mr. O’Brien Jr. does. Way more!

I pay taxes to have a people friendly town. To be fairly represented by leaders who represent all Coventry’s citizens without bias, prejudice, or hate.

You guys don’t own this town and you need to either follow section 2.10 of the Audience of Citizens Rules or just RESIGN and do us that favor.

It is time for Coventry to have real leaders, leaders who keep our town united and make it better every year regardless of a person’s political party, faith, nationality, or sexual orientation.

Once again, I’m formally putting in a request for the Council Chairwomen, Julie Blancherd, to assign a council member to address this matter. The reply should come from the horse’s mouth, Mr. O’Brien Jr.

I’m requesting that this report be included into the record.
March 2, 2020

I, Howard A. Haberern, a citizen of Coventry with my residence located at 80 Cassidy Hill Rd. Coventry, Ct. request that the Town Council appoints a council person to address my question and concern. I request that this will be on the next Town Councils agenda.

I prefer that Town Council Member Matt O'Brien Jr. himself give an oral reply at the next meeting for the purpose of Transparency.

The matter is, does Town Council member, Matt O'Brien still believe and support the statement that he made publicly at Creaser Park that “all Democrats are Godless people who are compromised by the Devil.” I feel that he and the council have the obligation to address this concern since it both applies to the swearing in oath that he swore to and one of the Town Council’s Goal of Transparency.

I'd like to have this included in the record.

Howard Haberern

[Signature]

3/2/2020
Good evening, Jennifer Burdette of Andover

Last week I communicated with Mr. Elsesser regarding the process for filing a formal complaint against the Chief of Police. At his instructions, I have prepared a signed letter I would like to share tonight.
March 2, 2020

Mr. John Elsesser  
Town Manager  
Coventry, CT

Dear Mr. Elsesser,

Please accept this letter as a formal personnel complaint regarding Chief of Police Mark Palmer. The specifics of my complaint are as follows.

On September 23, 2019, I met with Chief Palmer at 3:00 pm at the Coventry Police Department. This meeting was to make him aware of Officer Michael Hicks' sexual harassment of my daughter when she was a minor in 2012-2013.

I was escorted into Chief Palmer’s Office with Sergeant Ted Opdenbrouw in attendance. After discussing the evidence with Chief Palmer, he then signed into my daughter’s Facebook account, with her on speakerphone. Then he personally viewed the evidence of Officer Hicks’ improper/inappropriate/illegal communications with my daughter with technical help from Sergeant Opdenbrouw. I immediately noticed a change in the room. As I sat quietly waiting while the evidence was reviewed, Sergeant Opdenbrouw proceeded to stare at me for long periods without breaking his gaze. I found this highly intimidating and unusual, especially as I was the mother of a victim (as opposed to a suspect in a crime or being under arrest). I found this conduct to be intimidating, alarming, and very inappropriate for a parent of a victim who was coming forward to report misconduct or criminal activity.

At that time, Chief Palmer specifically told me that there was no need for me to go to Troop K (in that my daughter was residing in Andover at the time of the improper/inappropriate/illegal communications from Officer Hicks). Chief Palmer told myself and my daughter not to talk about our allegations against Officer Hicks. Coming from your town’s
chief of police, I took Chief Palmer's instructions as the usual standing operating procedure for such a situation.

The next day, on September 24, 2019, my daughter received a telephone call from Chief Palmer. During that telephone call, Chief Palmer stated that he was not going to conduct a criminal investigation into her allegations, but he would look into possibly sanctioning Officer Hicks.

After my complaint and the September 23, 2019 meeting, Chief Palmer was well aware that my daughter was a resident of Andover when Officer Hicks engaged in his improper/inappropriate/illegal communications with her. Yet, Chief Palmer intentionally neglected his duties and responsibilities under the relevant polices governing investigations of complaints against Coventry Police Officers. He failed to contact the State Police (Andover not having its own police force or department) and even discouraged us from doing so. Chief Palmer also intentionally chose not to contact State's Attorney Mathew Gedansky for guidance and direction into a potential criminal investigation process before he, in less than a day of reviewing evidence, decided, that no criminal investigation would be conducted into Officer Hicks' misconduct.

Being an experienced law enforcement officer, as well as having attended the Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy for additional training, Chief Palmer, should certainly have known that Officer Hicks' improper/inappropriate/illegal conduct relative to my daughter potentially constituted federal crimes. Accordingly, Chief Palmer should have done the following: (1) notified the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Attorney's office; and, (2) requested assistance from both. He did not do so. I believe this was an attempt to keep Officer Hicks' misconduct from becoming known by either the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the United States Attorney's office, or both, By keeping Officer Hicks' misconduct from them, I believe that Chief Palmer hoped that he could keep them from investigating and potentially charging Officer Hicks with federal crimes. Finally, I believe that Chief Palmer intentionally chose to keep Officer Hicks' misconduct from them so that the Coventry Police Department and he would not receive scrutiny, and that the Coventry Police Department and he would not be the subject of negative media and public scrutiny.
In stark contrast to Chief Palmer's conduct, when I called Troop K on September 24, 2019 for guidance and to inform them of Officer Hicks' misconduct, Troop K immediately sent a trooper to take a full report and collect evidence saying the crime was committed in Andover. Based upon the allegations and evidence, Troop K decided to transfer the case against Officer Hicks to Major Crimes Eastern District, with approval from the State’s Attorney to continue with a full investigation into Officer Hicks' misconduct. That is the type of immediate, thorough and objective action that I had expected to receive from Chief Palmer, but did not.

On September 26, 2019, Chief Palmer called my daughter and asked her who she had told about Officer Hicks’ misconduct and who knew about his misconduct. It is not clear why Chief Palmer would call a victim and ask her such questions since she was free to tell whomever she desired. An objective observer could certainly view Chief Palmer’s telephone call and questions as an attempt to have a victim of misconduct by one of his subordinate officers keep quiet about that misconduct.

On September 30, 2019, I received an email from Chief Palmer, who had completed a complaint form himself and was sending it to me to sign. I specifically stated in my complaint that I was afraid for my safety because Officer Hicks’ father had stated to my daughter that Officer Hicks does not make good decisions when his life is stressful. Given the nature of my daughter’s allegations against him and the fact that he was going to be the subject of a criminal investigation, I believed that Officer Hicks had the potential to make poor decisions going forward.

On October 1, 2019, I received an email from Chief Palmer stating he would be informing Officer Hicks of the complaint against him. By a reply email, I again informed Chief Palmer of my concerns about my safety stemming from Officer Hicks’ known propensity for making poor life decisions when under stress.

Despite my expressed concerns for my safety, Chief Palmer allowed Officer Hicks to retain his service weapon. Chief Palmer ignored every warning sign given to him of the potential danger of Officer Hicks keeping his service weapon. With Officer Hicks not having police
power or law enforcement responsibilities during his paid administrative leave; it is unclear why Chief Palmer would allow him to keep his service weapon. Chief Palmer’s decision to allow Officer Hicks to retain his service weapon wholly failed to consider the potentially-dire consequences to myself – as well as to Officer Hicks, his family, and the general public.

Section 2.7.11 of the Department’s polices requires the subject of complaint to be informed of that complaint, in writing. “This notification shall normally take place within 24 hours of the receipt of the complaint, or on the employee’s next work day.” However, Chief Palmer failed to notify Officer Hicks within this time period. Instead, to the best of my knowledge Officer Hicks continued reporting to work and duty with full weapons and police powers until October 1, 2019. Chief Parker’s delay could have allowed Officer Hicks to potentially find out through other sources of this serious matter and could have adversely affected the integrity of the investigation into his misconduct. While I do not have evidence that Officer Hicks did anything while on duty between the date of my complaint and his being placed on paid administrative leave which compromised the investigation into his misconduct (nor do I have the means to uncover any such conduct if it occurred), Chief Palmer’s delay opened up the possibility and provided Officer Hicks with the opportunity to compromise the investigation into his misconduct.

Section 2.7.12 of the Department’s polices requires the assigned investigator to contact the complainants by phone or writing at least every four weeks to give them a status update on the investigation. These required contacts have not occurred.

In July 2017, State’s Attorney Mathew Gedansky bestowed an Officer of the Year Award upon Officer Hicks. This was done despite Chief Palmer having disciplined Officer Hicks twice during 2017 for misuse of social media (social media he had years before utilized to engage in improper/inappropriate/illegal communications with my then-minor daughter). Chief Palmer neglected to make State’s Attorney Gedansky aware of Officer Hicks’ misconduct and ensuing discipline which had occurred during the very same year as the award being bestowed.
Section 2.7.6 of the Department's policies states that, during all criminal investigations involving a member of the Department, liaison shall be maintained with the State's Attorney that may ultimately prosecute the case if an arrest were to be made. Chief Palmer neglected to create and maintain liaison with the State's Attorney as stated in Coventry Police Protocol in various ways throughout the criminal investigation of Officer Hicks – including failing to contact State's Attorney Gedansky when the allegations against Officer Hicks were initially made.

In addition, Chief Palmer did not inform the State Police immediately when another alleged victim of Officer Hicks came forward during the investigation into his misconduct. Again, an objective observer could certainly view this failure as an attempt by Chief Palmer to avoid negative media and public scrutiny of a subordinate officer and/or the Department.

Mr. Elsesser, you will recall, in a February 6, 2020 telephone call, you acknowledged to myself that you were fully aware of Chief Palmer's decision not to disclose this information to Major Crimes or the States Attorney, and to instead perform his own private investigation, with reassurances to me, he would let Major Crimes know at the end. This telephone call occurred approximately two weeks after the original complaint by the other alleged victim was made. Further, you are a recipient of my emails to Chief Palmer throughout that week asking him to reveal this information to Major Crimes voluntarily, and finally informing him I have alerted them myself and relayed his stance on informing them. It was only at that point, when he was forced to do so by my actions, that Chief Palmer chose to inform the State Police. Again, an objective observer could certainly view Chief Palmer's unwillingness to inform the State Police and/or the State's Attorney as an attempt to avoid negative media and public scrutiny of a subordinate officer and/or the Department.

As set out in this complaint, Chief Palmer has neglected to follow the Department's own written procedures concerning investigations into allegations of misconduct by his officer. In addition, Chief Palmer has neglected to provide for safety of witnesses and victims of Officer Hicks. Chief Palmer chose not to work in liaison with the State's Attorney and State Police. Chief Palmer chose not to inform proper outside agencies
when he became aware of an alleged criminal act by one of his officers. Finally, Chief Palmer failed to provide a non-intimidating atmosphere in his office, during intake of the complaint and evidence against Officer Hicks.

Given Chief Palmer's handling of my daughter's and the other victim's allegations against Officer Hicks, I question if Chief Palmer has been informing you, Mr. Elsesser, in a timely manner of allegations of misconduct/illegal activity made against any Coventry Police officer. Not doing so seriously impedes (if not eliminates) your ability to contact the Town Attorney for timely legal advice or reflect upon the situation and request outside agencies be involved.

Since Chief Palmer is the highest-ranking law enforcement officer in the Coventry Police Department, I believe that any subordinate officer/employee of the Department would not be able to conduct a fair, objective and thorough investigation of this complaint against Chief Palmer. Consequently, I request that an outside law enforcement agency, either at the state or federal level, be asked to conduct the investigation into my complaint against Chief Palmer, and you form a liaison with that agency.

Finally, I am not an attorney. Consequently, the sections of the Department's policies concerning complaints and investigations against Department personnel, which I mention in this complaint, may not be all of the sections/policies with which Chief Palmer has failed to comply.

Thank you for receiving this complaint, and I ask for a full investigation regarding this complaint against Chief Palmer, and any and all appropriate action be taken.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jennifer Burdette