1. **Call to Order, Roll Call:** Julie Blanchard called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Present were Julie Blanchard, Richard Williams, Lisa Thomas, Lisa Conant and Jon Hand. Absent: Matt O'Brien Sr. and Matt O'Brien Jr. Also in attendance were John Elsesser Town Manager, Amanda Backhaus Finance Director and representatives from Fire/EMS and Public Works as noted below.

2. **Unfinished Business: 19/2-51: FY20/21 Budget:**

**2.A.1 Fire/EMS:** The Fire/EMS staff and volunteers were invited to join the Council. Present were James McLoughlin Fire/EMS Director, Bud Meyers Fire Marshall/Chief of NCFD, and Alloffsky. James McLoughlin went through the presentation that had been attached to the budget. He started by outlining the new mission statement and core values of the three current departments – CVFA, NCFD and Town of Coventry Fire/EMS. He briefly described the duties that now are handled town-wide by Town of Coventry Fire/EMS. John noted that going forward the fire police will be providing the flagging service for the Farmers Market. Jimmy noted the fire police have over 14 people who have signed up and they are excited to be involved. Jimmy reviewed the goals and accomplishments of the department as outlined in his presentation. Highlights include:

- This Thursday will be the first joint meeting between the fire transition team and the Board of Fire Officers. They will be looking to make recommendations on staffing assignments to the Town Manager who would then provide it to the whole Council.
- The Town has been able to find a single person for fire prevention and another for communications who are coordinating activities Town-wide which is a huge benefit.
- Bud noted we are going to need new VF pagers as our current ones will no longer be supported by Tolland County Dispatch. Jimmy noted the estimate for radio and pagers replacement is around $70,000 and they are in the process of applying for a grant to purchase this equipment.
- Jimmy noted we applied for a rate increase for our EMS calls and were approved for an increase of $60 per call.
- The Fire Transition Committee has moved from stage 1 to stage 2.

Jimmy reviewed the current year capital request. He noted the need for the new key system so that they can interact as a unified department and be able to use both departments. The second request is to replace Rescue 211 truck which is currently 23 years old. John noted it is still in good shape and can be repurposed for the fire police which would help since they are currently using their personal vehicles. Jimmy notes there has been a large increase in the use of this service vehicle: from 25 calls in 2018 to 80 calls in 2019. Also in the capital request is $70k for engine tank refurb of a 2002 E-One pumper that is 18 years. Jimmy noted he has one quote for around $100k and is waiting on two more quotes. John noted we funded $50k in
FY20 and this request of $70 would be added to it. Bud noted that if we save on the engine refurb he would really like to see that funds reallocated for SCBA or fire equipment purchases as there are great needs especially for SCBA. The last capital requests annual reoccurring for both air packs and fire equipment. Lisa T asked if there were grants for SCBA as there had been in the past. Bud noted they are not reoccurring grants and we would not get funding for equipment that we have not maintained.

Jimmy moved to the operational budget - which has 6 categories:

1. Fire Marshall: Budget has a slight reduction due to contracted services. They cut out $1,300 in NFPA subscriptions due to access of previous versions. Bud noted NFPA releases new standards roughly every three years and it easier to buy new ones as they come out rather than purchase access to all of them. Jimmy noted if they get very out of date they will need refreshing money.

2. CVFA: Slight budget increase for a level service budget with changes only to add the generator service contract and the C022 monitoring. There has also been an increase to fire extinguisher testing contract.

3. NCFD: Has similar increases as CVFA to keep level services and add the previous noted items.

4. Joint fire: This budget includes a portion of the Admin salaries, volunteer stipends, equipment repairs, contracted dispatch services and several other. Amanda noted one of the largest increases is in the pension line which is for the years of service award program. The increase is due to the actuarially determined calculation of benefit. The increase maintains level service and does note have an increase to benefits. Amanda noted the fund is only 65% funded and it is important to put in the actuarially determined figure. Julie asked what the $80 thousand for travel was for as it seemed high for travel. Jimmy noted this is the annual stipend that is split amongst the members. This calculation varies each year based on how many total points are earned in a given year - which then gets divided between the members based on how many they have each earned for responding to calls and going to trainings. Jimmy noted that is the incentive to help maintain membership. Bud noted that this is a points per event system and not number of hours volunteering – hours provided would be significantly higher. John noted the EMS fund subsidy is also included in the joint budget and that it is not increasing, mainly due to the increase in fees we can charge for EMS calls. In addition, this rate increase helped negate the increased costs associated with increased Vintech Hours effective 1/1/20. Julie asked about collections in the EMS fund. Amanda noted we have seen an increase in collections. She noted they have changed how they review the accounts and now more accounts are sent to collection if they do not respond to the Comstar communications. Jimmy noted there has been a great reduction in accounts to review for write off or collection in comparison to a few years ago.

5. Emergency Manganese: Minimal changes from prior year. This section funds a portion of the Admin salary as well as meetings and conferences. The salary is partially funded by the State EMPG grant.
6. EMS Fund Budget: Jimmy outlined this budget also has a portion of the Admin salary, and also has training, service contracts, equipment, supplies and fuel. Jimmy noted we just negotiated our contract with Vintech. The contract expired at the end of February and we were able to negotiate no rate increases until 7/1 at which time we will see a 4% increase, with a 3% annual increase going forward. Jimmy noted this budget also has reimbursement for the monthly stipend for those individuals responding to EMS calls who are paid per call. Service contracts includes Vintech, Comstar, mutual aid for ambulance service of Manchester and also Windham. Jimmy noted $15k has been included to help start the rebranding for Department 18. This budget includes money to be put aside for the replacement ambulance scheduled for 2024. Amanda noted this year the EMS Fund budget also includes a capital request for a power loader and stretcher for the ambulance.

Jimmy moved on to discuss the Transition Team progress. They are hoping to start an interim Department 18 on July 1 and they are working to get an interim slate of people together for approval. Thursday they will discuss policies and staffing with the joint meeting as mentioned earlier. Jimmy noted the job descriptions that had been provided to the Council were meant to be permanent. They will add verbiage noting that anyone holding the interim position would need to be “substantially complete” with the qualifications to be able to hold the interim position. Jimmy noted recommendations for who would fill the interim positions will come from both the Transition Team and Board of Fire Officers and he feels they will make adequate requests with qualified people.

Jimmy noted it is the Town’s funding along with the fantastic volunteers that allow the departments to provide services. He noted the Council’s support is greatly appreciated.

John noted funding for air packs and SCBA are low in comparison to the department’s requests and the Council will need to take this into consideration. The funding for branding is obviously not even close to what was requested and perhaps we can use year-end surpluses to assist in funding this is important to move forward. Lisa T noted when she was previously on the Council she was told to never mention unified departments. She is amazed at what this group has worked through and how much they have gotten done. Jon Hand thanked Jimmy for his hard work and the volunteers throughout the organizations who care so deeply about what they are doing. Julie thanked everyone for coming and expressed her appreciation.

2.A.2 Public Works: Mark Kiefer Public Works Director was invited to join the Council. Mark noted that he will review increases and cuts and skip through areas of no change but please ask questions as needed.

3100 Roads and Drainage: Mark noted there are payroll increases due contractual obligations for to union employees. He notes a small increase in OT for time preparing the road bond. There is an increase in temporary employees. There is no increase in hours, but an increase in pay rate as we have had issue with hiring summer help and the positions have remained
unfilled in prior year. Mark noted small decreases for equipment rental, meals, clothing and safety, hand tools and traffic control for signage. Lisa C inquired about the social media complaints relating to sign costs. John noted that the information posted was not accurate. Mark noted when the signs were purchased 10-12 years ago due to ADA requirements, we also added the Town Seal to major throughways but not secondary roads. It currently costs $8 per sign for the seal. Lisa T noted higher costs when it started. John agreed the set-up cost was more at the time and now it much cheaper and does not cost the taxpayers anything significant.

3101 Public works building: Mark noted an increase to service contracts due to janitorial and garage door maintenance. The building is 8 years old and there have been increased repairs relating to the door hinges. Also, additional contractual services were included for our waste oil furnace but it depends on the quality of oil - which can lead to the furnace breaking. Other changes were to utilities based on actual historical results and good oil pricing due that were locked in with Dime Oil. John noted that today we locked in electric today at 0.0754 effective on the first meter read in December. For heating oil we set a desired rate with the vendor and had them lock in as soon as rates dropped that low. For vehicle fuel we locked at a later date based on economic conditions. John notes it is hard to know when to lock but it at least gives us solid numbers to use for budget purposes.

3102 Snow Removal: Mark noted there are no changes proposed to the Snow Removal Budget. Mark noted they just placed an order for salt for 250 tons which will be $20k and we also have a contractual obligation to purchase white salt which will be around $6k. Based on his estimates there will be $58k left in the budget. Amanda noted she will verify. Jon Hand asked about the levels at the salt shed. Mark noted it will be full with all materials needed. John noted we will be proposing to use the remainder in the salt budget towards tree removal. In addition, Mark noted we have only spent about 72% of the OT budget so there might be savings there. Mark noted that he would caution against lowering the budget as we budget for average and historically we have spent a lot more. He recommends and hopes we can keep the funding at the current levels. Prior years have seen a great deal of additional appropriations.

3103 Facility Maintenance: Mark noted salary increases due to contractual obligations. There is again an increase to the temporary laborer due to increase in pay rate. Mark noted that John decreased other prof services and that he would caution against it. We have had a couple springs we couldn’t get fertilizer on the fields due to the wetness and he would really like to increase applications on the fields to get them into better shape. Mark asked the Council to reinstate the $2,500. Mark noted the drainage on the school softball fields appears to have worked well and he will be working on those fields this year.

Mark noted he talked to anchor today about the football field. They plan to go to DEEP has changed due to depth of cap on the landfill. They wanted to install piping and stone to vent methane gas. Regardless of what types of field stays there we must move forward with getting rid of the methane.
Richard asked Mark to explain his responsibility for the BOE fields. Mark noted that Public Works maintains everything: mowing, painting, grooming, fertilizing, grub control, irrigation. Richard asked what the biggest challenge was in regards to the BOE fields. Mark noted the hardest part is coordinating getting on the fields. There is significant pressure from programs for them to get to use the fields which limits the amount of time public works can maintain them. It is also challenging to coordinate staff and the demand from the public is very high. Richard asked if the irrigation at the school softball fields was no longer an issue. Mark noted he needs to review during spring conditions but the fields looked very good during the fall. He is optimistic the fields will no longer have irrigation problems.

3104 PW Administration: Mark noted only contractual increases to salaries and trivial decreases to advertising and printing based on historical actual.

3105 Fleet Maintenance: The salary increase is contractual. There was an increase to the OT line in order to accommodate issues with Fire vehicles that have occurred in the past. There are small decreases to a few lines. Gasoline was decreased by $2,000. John noted we have purchased a hybrid police vehicle this year and two more are included in the FY21 budget so we are anticipating savings there.

3107 Association Matching Funds: John noted no change has been proposed to this budget. There are only 4 association left with minimal roads.

3108 Street Lights: John noted a decrease in street lights as PURA recently passed changes in rulings and we can now convert our flood and decorative lights to LED which will result in savings.

3109 Cemetery: Amanda noted the salary change is just an accounting shift to break out the temporary workers from our Town Sexton. Mark noted we have Lance who provides services to the cemetery and we also hire summer help to help maintain the grounds. Amanda noted the commission requested an additional $5k for grub/mole treatment and fertilizer. John has reduced this to $1,500 which is reasonable. Amanda noted that in addition they have requested funds for headstone repair as they recently found a contractor who does amazing work at repairs. A brief discussion was had over the Cemetery shed and the possibility of getting electricity to the shed.

3110 Tree: Mark noted he has added a stipend for his Tree Warden position which had been omitted in the past. Lisa T asked about the proposed legislation for help with tree removal and if it will help the Town. John noted the legislation is to allow Towns to use LOCIP funds for tree removal. This would then reallocate the funds we currently use for other projects. John reminded the Council LOCIP has not even been funded for FY20 yet. Mark noted he asked for an increase of $50k. John reduced that budget so there is now $70k remaining. Mark notes we will need more than that and it will be an ongoing issue for the next few years. Mark reviewed our tree removal program which includes: responding to residents to determine if fallen trees are in the Town’s right of way, working with our summer roads money to clear trees which
doing road work, and working with Eversource to assist with removal and trimming of Town trees as they do work on their trees. Eversource provided us with over $20k of tree removal this past year. Mark noted there is no tree inventory. This would cause a need for additional staff and would open the Town up to additional liability.

John asked Mark to outline how we select tree removal vendors. Mark notes we use the State and CRCOG bids which include Tennet and Asplundh. Distinctive Tree Removal has also been used based on availability to answer calls. Also, Distinctive hauls the wood which is useful. Asplundh is the cheapest but it is hard to get the crews out and they are not as refined so Tennet typically gets more work done. John noted the firm complaining on social media would not provide us with a day rate so we were unable to them hire. Mark notes that Tennet is $1,450 a day, Asplundh is $1,250 a day and Distinctive is $2,500 a day but also includes wood removal. Richard noted he thinks those are great rates. Mark notes he would welcome the firm in question to provide a day rate as the Town could use a fourth crew at this point.

3111 Other Facilities: John notes this budget is for utilities for random town owned buildings such as Babcock Hill and Millbrook.

3201 Engineer: John noted the only change is salary changes and longevity. John noted we do budget an intern. Todd noted that he is working on getting an interview with his candidate and will have an update soon.

Capital Budget: Mark reviewed the road bond work and planned work for next year in both road bonds and summer roads/TAR work as outlined on the agenda packet.

He reviewed the impact for loss of TR funding - which means removal of bituminous shimming, chip sealing and crack seal. Mark notes if we do not get the TAR funding he will request this be funded by capital money from the GF. Mark hopes the State comes through with the funding and that it will not be an issue. Mark notes the longer the roads wait the more damage that will occur to them.

Lisa C asked if School Street is on any upcoming plan. Mark noted the water line went in and we need to get that done as well. Amanda noted that is part of the road bond. John notes there is some drainage that needs to be done before that work can be done. It is still planned to be completed this year.

John noted there is also equipment included in the capital budget. Mark notes there is a large dump truck for $210,500, which will be purchased through lease purchase. Mark noted in the prior year we were able to receive grant funding but that money is not available so we must pay full cost. We are replacing 200 international with 58k in mileage. Mark noted there is bridge culverts and guardrail projects funded by LOCIP. It was noted the mower for $12k was still in the budget. John noted we need a larger mower, it can wait until next year, and we can remove the small mower from this year’s budget so it is a potential cut.
Mark asked for questions from the Council. None were noted. The Council thanked him for coming to discuss the budget. John noted that the department is incredibly busy with projects this summer and the staff is working incredibly hard.

2.A.3 Budget Deliberations: Julie noted she wants to talk about budget meetings. She asked John to move police from tonight due to size. Julie then said she cut out human services and Lisa T inquired as to why. Lisa T notes it is good to hear from them and there are state legislation that could potentially affect youth service. She wants to know more of what is available through youth services and how we can collaborate with the BOE to support families and children before they get out of kindergarten. Julie noted perhaps a non-budget meeting would be useful. John notes Sneha, our youth services coordinator, has been a great asset to the department and has built good relationships with the schools. John notes he has a verbal approval for a new human services director but it is one of few positions the Council must approve. He noted it will be on the next agenda. Richard asked if this is more of a BOE issue. Lisa T noted it is what the kids are coming to school without - and often they need more than what is provided by the schools, especially if they have not been designated as a special-ed child. Lisa T notes she would like to discuss it further perhaps at a non-budget related meeting. John noted it would be useful to include the Youth Advisory Committee and the Board of Education to get all the parties together to work together. John notes we should briefly mention at BOE meeting next week and with follow up after budget season when the new human services director has settled in.

3. Adjournment: Motion made to adjourn at 9:57 pm made by Jon Hand and seconded by Richard. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amanda L. Backhaus, CPA
Finance Director

Note: These minutes are draft/not official until approved by the Town Council at the next Council meeting. Please see subsequent meeting for approval or changes to these minutes.