

**MINUTES  
COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL  
MARCH 15, 2021  
7:30 P.M. – REGULAR MEETING  
TOWN HALL ANNEX & VIRTUAL**

**1. Call To Order, Roll Call:**

The meeting was called to order by Blanchard at 7:30 p.m.

Members present:

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

Members absent:

Also present:

John Elsesser – Town Manager  
Amanda Backhaus – Finance Director - remote

**2. Pledge Of Allegiance:**

Council members and Staff stood to recite the pledge.

**3. Audience Of Citizens:**

(30 minutes)

Submit comments of a general nature to be read aloud to: [audience@coventry.org](mailto:audience@coventry.org) (Deadline 4 p.m.)

Blanchard read the comments from the following citizens. Their statements are attached to these Minutes.

Richard Church, 336 Pucker Street – Wrote about the resolution brought forward at the March 1, 2021 meeting denouncing all forms of political violence.

Joan Lewis, 48 Antrim Road – Wrote to indicate her support of the Town Manager’s Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

Carolyn Arabolos, 132 North Farms Road – Wrote about the partisan resolution that does not address the truth of the insurrection that took place on January 6, 2021.

Elsesser said 43 letters about the budget were received by noon on Thursday when the agenda was posted. These can be read by using the link on the online agenda. The Council members each received the letters as they were submitted to their individual email addresses. We appreciate all of the comments received pertaining to the budget.

#### 4. Acceptance Of Minutes:

- **March 1, 2021**

**Motion:** I move to accept the minutes of March 1, 2021 meeting.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Thomas

With the following corrections:

- Page 2, top of page Motion – change to read “I move that the Council move up the Library Budget presentation item next.”.
- Page 2, item 4 Motion by – change to read “O'Brien, Jr.”.
- Page 6, item 6.F.1., third bullet – change “drop box” to “food distribution” and “continuing” to “continue”.
- Page 7, item 6.F.2., second paragraph, eighth sentence – change “disturbing” to “distributing”.
- Page 13, first line – add “Hand said” to before “This”.
- Page 15, item 9.B., paragraph after section from the BOE minutes – add a “.” after “issue” and begin a new sentence with “For”.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Thomas, Conant

Against: None

Abstain: None

**Motion:** I move that the Council move up item 7.A.1. Board of Education budget presentation next.

By: Thomas

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: O'Brien, Sr. welcomed the BOE members present and read a statement that was going to be part of his Finance meeting report.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Thomas, Conant

Against: None

Abstain: None

#### 5. Consent Agenda:

All items listed with an asterisk (\*) will be acted on by one motion. There will be no separate discussion on these items unless a Council members so requests, in which case, the item will be removed from the consent agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

**Motion:** I move to accept the Consent Agenda.

By: Hand

Seconded: O'Brien, Jr.

Discussion: Conant asked that item 6.F.6 Celebrate Spring in Coventry Village be removed from the Consent Agenda. Blanchard noted the appointment of the Special Constable is on the Consent Agenda. Elsesser said if the Council does not take action on that the appointment is automatically approved.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

## **6. Reports:**

### **6.A. Council Chairwoman: Julie A. Blanchard**

Blanchard said there is going to be a 5k road race on March 20, 2021 beginning at noon for Make a Wish CT. The race route has participants leaving and ending at Laidlaw Park. Questions about the event can be submitted to the Town Manager's office.

### **6.B. Council Members:**

Thomas reported the death of Mark Lavitt and of this being a loss to the town of this unexpected and sudden death. He served on the Economic Development Commission. His trade was a land developer and his imprint is on many of our developments. Thomas also acknowledged Ray Eldridge being appointed as the Assistant Emergency Management Director. Thomas asked Elsesser to explain why the work is taking place in a wooded area of town as there is a lot of speculation about what is happening on social media. Elsesser said the tree work coincides with the Council's adopted goal to do forestry management. The trees marked for cutting have been damaged by gypsy moths or the emerald ash borer. If these are not taken down now we will have to pay to have them cut down. This is new land for us and a forest road will be cut for the tree removal and to allow us to check out what is in there. There will not be a formal trail system. This is part of the forestry management plan. Ribbons have been placed where the skid road will go and the trees that are coming down are marked. This activity will help the health of the forest. Hull Forestry, the preferred vendor of DEEP, will be doing the work; they did the work on Patriot's Park forest land. Thomas asked if some of the wood has value where does the money from that go. Elsesser said it will go into the forestry management fund; money comes out of that fund for replanting or for the removal of dangerous trees in our parks or other town owned land.

Hand wished to acknowledge and congratulate Courtside Nutrition. He attended the grand opening. Hand expressed kudos and wished the business well.

O'Brien, Sr. said there were a number of budget related comments regarding the Girls' Softball field. There seems to be a misunderstanding of the process. The amount for the field is listed in the CIP. That is not a budget item. Typically, it would be a separate question on the referendum and, if approved, it would go out for bonding. Elsesser said future borrowing projects are listed in the CIP for consideration. The CIP is accepted through a town meeting. There is no cash set aside for these projects. Projects are given a placeholder in the CIP to move the discussion along.

**6.C. Finance Committee: Matthew O'Brien, Sr., Chairperson**

O'Brien, Sr. said a short meeting was held to go over the town reports. These are on track for the year.

**6.C.1. \* Monthly Financial Reports**

**6.D. \* Steering Committee: Matthew D. O'Brien, Jr., Chairperson**

**6.D.1. \* Minutes, February 22, 2021**

**6.E. \* COVRRA – John A. Elsesser:**

**6.F. Town Manager – John A. Elsesser**

**6.F.1. Projects Update**

Updates to Elsesser's distributed report are:

- The State is replacing the culvert in front of Highland Park Market. The project will begin this summer with significant impacts to Route 44 traffic. The culvert conveys water from Grange Hall under the road to the Highland Park plaza.
- The State is suggesting pavement technology of a rougher surface for Route 31 at Birch Bend. The pavement is more rugged. Elsesser is looking for guidance from the Council whether to hold a public information session or provide the go ahead to CT DOT. The surface is almost a cobblestone so tires get a better grip. The installation would impact traffic for a couple of days. Elsesser can ask the State if they are scheduling a multi-town education session about this. The location chosen is based on the number of accidents and the radius of the curve. If the surface would cause additional noise O'Brien, Sr. asked that the neighbors be alerted.
- The Girls' Softball Committee has emailed their recommendation. This was given to Finance as the next step. The Committee chose the gravel pit location.

Thomas noticed that Officer Olivia Beausoleil resigned. Elsesser said he heard from Chief Palmer that this is due to changes in her personal life. Options were explored to see if her situation could be accommodated but those were not successful. This is unfortunate because we were up to full staff on 6 days per week. A decision is pending for a replacement.

Thomas also noticed there are a lot of new businesses coming into town and a lot of empty spaces are getting filled. Elsesser said kudos to the EDC and Land Use staff for the positive outreach that has been happening. Elsesser has heard there may be an

option on the Hartford Healthcare building and the house next to Dollar General. He has also heard a nail salon is going in next to Courtside Nutrition. Dr. Keenan's office has been leased to a business that will move in there in June. There are not a lot of empty spaces left. In April the location of Coventry Antiques will have the final clean up and water test done; someone is interested in doing something there. A person is looking at where Coventry Fitness was and someone is looking at the Penalty Box plaza. Someone has been paying rent since January at the Reid's location. Hytone Farm is working on a digester for manure management. We are working to resolve issues and trying to negotiate with Dunkin' Donuts and the landlord for a longer drive through lane; there are some land issues with the land owner.

O'Brien, Jr. asked if the new occupant of Reid's has applied for permits yet. Elsesser said they have not talked to the Health District or to the town thus far.

### **6.F.2. COVID-19 Update**

Elsesser said the Governor is accelerating the scheduling tiers for vaccines. Elsesser advised people to check Walgreens and CVS for vaccine scheduling as the VAMS system is complicated. Phone access is not good. Talk to a friend, family members, or Human Services if you don't have access to a computer for scheduling vaccine appointments.

O'Brien, Sr. asked if the town could put up funds to hold a vaccine event in Coventry. Have the costs for doing this been investigated? Elsesser said the issue is getting the vaccine. The Health District staff has been diverted to helping with the State's efforts. We can keep this idea open if it will help with the overall effort and is reasonable. Elsesser said we have nagged to set something up and will continue to do so.

### **6.F.3. Federal COVID Act**

Elsesser said we have not gotten a lot of information about the money that will come in two tranches. We don't want to spend it before what we know is real. Some money should be given to us right before June 30, 2021. The money may be used for the following key items – COVID-19 related overtime pay in the police department, the lost revenues of the Park & Recreation department, the loss of money on the lower interest rate, and the additional 12-hours per day of ambulance service. These are extra costs that we have to carry. Elsesser is not sure the 30% increase in trash would be justified as a COVID-19 related expense. There are fixed overhead costs and staffing costs. In addition, we have been providing business support. The HVAC project may get a pot of money. A water tower project for the Village area would be in support of economic development there. There is one clear rule that these funds cannot be used to lower taxes.

O'Brien, Sr. confirmed with Elsesser that DEEP is still against the expansion of the sewers from the Bolton line. You would think this is a wonderful opportunity to think broadly and wisely for economic development.

Elsesser said the town has been having a couple of positive cases each week. There have been no deaths of town residents in some time.

#### **6.F.4. Microgrid Update**

Elsesser said this continues to be worked on. A meeting is being scheduled with another financial firm. The vendor continues to fine-tune construction prices. We are still waiting for DEEP to formalize the approval because of PURA regulations. Significant progress is being made.

#### **6.F.5. \* Staff Meeting Minutes, 3/3/21**

#### **6.F.6. \* Event: “Celebrate Spring In Coventry Village”**

Conant said she wants to highlight this event. The event is scheduled for a month from now and it will be more limited than the Daffodil celebrations in the past. Not all businesses in the Village will be able to participate. There will be a bit of a competition and prizes given out. Conant feels this event will be really needed by the scheduled date.

### **7. Unfinished Business:**

#### **7.A. 20/21-56: FY 2021/2022 Budget**

##### **1. Board of Education (documents previously distributed) (7:45 PM)**

O’Brien, Sr. read the following:

I would like to recognize and congratulate the Superintendent of schools, David Petrone, the Board of Education, and their staff, for the terrific job they have all done over the past year, since the Covid-19 pandemic impacted our schools and our students. They have worked hard and wisely to react to unprecedented circumstances – nothing like this has ever happened in our lifetimes. The Superintendent and the Board provided outstanding leadership and foresight when they properly engaged the leadership of our schools in planning and implementing strategies that have enabled Coventry to provide all students the option to have in class education or to learn remotely from home since September 2020. Their quick actions and solid planning enabled them to secure the supplies and resources that Coventry schools would need, even though there were limited supplies and a great deal of competition for those resources. Coventry is one of the few school districts that have been able to offer this option to their students. Many of our neighbors have not fared as well.

There were many unknowns and tremendous uncertainty that we all faced and you have been wonderful partners with the Town Manager, our staff and the Town Council and I want to thank you for your work. The Board has successfully integrated the Federal funds that we have received from the state in the form of ESSER I funds and CRF funds. The Board received some of the CRF funds directly from the state and the Town shared additional CRF funds that we received with the Board. Through careful management and planning, they have been able to absorb hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional unbudgeted Covid related expenses and I believe will end the year with no shortfall and possibly a small surplus, without having to use the \$100,000 the Council set aside in our general fund, to help them if it was needed. That is no small feat and I congratulate you. The Board is getting an additional \$521,000 in ESSER II funds from the federal relief package, passed last December, and they have incorporated some of those funds, into the projected

budget, to reduce the impacts of Covid related spending that has been included in this budget and they will have additional funds available for the following year's budget.

This year's budget is impacted because the Town of Coventry, including our schools, is self-insured for our health insurance. This has provided tremendous savings in our budgets for several years but this year is different. We have experienced a number of costly claims recently and because of that the Board's budget includes an increase of \$216,616, a 6.24% increase for health insurance costs. The Town budget includes a 10% increase in health insurance costs, which is \$92,800.

We are all aware of the gyrations that the stock market has gone through, since much of the country's economy was shut down, and our pension fund did not realize the level of gains that had been built into the plan and are needed to keep it healthy. In order to better reflect the reality of our experience, the expected percentage increase that had been used to calculate our pension contributions is being lowered. This will result in the need for us to increase our contributions and the Board's budget includes a \$150,298 increase in their pension contribution this year. The Town budget includes a \$31,000 increase for pension as well. Together, these two items, pension and health insurance costs, which are out of the Board's control, account for \$366,914 of the projected increase, without accounting for steps and raises for staff and new hires.

After the Board approved and submitted their budget, the current Congress passed the American Relief Plan (ARP) that is reported to include over \$550,000 in additional funds (on top of the ESSER II funds) for Coventry schools. We are waiting to learn the precise amount that will be awarded and what opportunities that may present to reduce this projected budget further, either with the use of additional ESSER II funds or some of the new ARF funds, provide additional resources to help our students catch up and continue to thrive, and possibly provide funding for improving our air handling and filtering systems in our schools. The Town will also receive funding from the ARP and we will evaluate how those funds may be used to help as well.

The Town Council not only has to make certain that our students and our schools are supported and that the town is able to continue to provide quality service, under very difficult circumstances, but we also have to recognize that the Covid pandemic is continuing to negatively impact our citizens. It is true that many in Connecticut have been vaccinated and many more will be vaccinated over the coming weeks. We are hopeful that our economy can begin to recover and create good jobs for the millions who need them, including those in Coventry. The Town side of the budget contains \$403,800 just to fill the gaps created in our last budget by Covid.

We hope to continue to work together with the Board to tweak their budget proposal where possible, determine if additional grant funds can be used to reduce the budget request, determine if any staff that is retiring will be replaced at a lower salary, identify any other sources of funding, etc., while working to reduce the impact on taxpayers and provide our schools and students the budget they need to be successful.

Matthew O'Brien Sr.  
Vice Chairman, Coventry Town Council

The following people were present:

David Petrone, Superintendent, Robert Williams, Mary Kortmann, Bob Carroll, Christina Williams, William Oros, Jen Beausoleil, and Gene Marchand.

Jen Beausoleil began the presentation by saying the schools have had a very interesting and dynamic year since March of 2020 when we had to go remote. Many people in the district did a great job in ever changing conditions. The school system was one of the few to go into the classrooms five days a week as early as we did. In the upcoming budget items such as insurance, pension, and salary increases are outside of our control. Students are not yet eligible for the vaccine but we will continue with the precautions for the coming school year. The ESSR II grant will help to mitigate costs to the taxpayers. The BOE feels it has to plan on the virus precautions for at least one more year. The ESSR II money will be spread over a two-year span. There are gaps that are the result of remote learning. We owe it to the students to recover them to their academic levels.

David Petrone said details of the budget were given at the Town Meeting. O'Brien, Sr. said there may be a different audience this evening to listen to the presentation.

Petrone thanked O'Brien, Sr. for the kind comments. These are the right things to do for the kids. For the last six budget cycles the school budget has been under a 2% increase and some years have been closer to 1%. This year the budget is over 3% that we have been able to bring down to 2.2% with the ESSR II money. We do some amazing things in the district including the recognition of academic achievement with the naming of a school as being Blue Ribbon. Petrone is proud of the work that everyone does in the schools. If we go too deep with any budget cuts it would affect us being able to keep moving forward. This budget will keep quality programs in place and make our system a lighthouse district.

Thomas asked about the positions being added or extended and what is the new staffing total. Dr. Petrone said positions were taken out of the Title 1 grant because that was reduced by ~\$66,400 and moved to the operating budget. There has been an uptick in the FTE count. The additions include a part-time math support person at the K-2 level for learning loss or to stop learning gaps and a nurse assistant because there is a real need for this position. We are enhancing a Maintenance Helper to a Maintenance Carpenter because this person has helped on many projects that we've been able to keep in house because of his craftsmanship. Resources are being shifted for a Stem & Computer Science person. A Technology Technician for support with help desk tickets which increased last spring when we had to go all in to remote learning. These last two positions mentioned are slated to continue until next spring. This is a direct COVID-19 related expense and will be funded by ESSR II

Williams asked what a Title 1 employee does. Petrone said these are paraeducators in the Reading Room at GHR. Conant asked if the Title 1 funding reduction is because of a decrease in the number of students receiving reduced/free lunch. Petrone said it was a funding cut; the need is still there. Title 1 funding was at \$121,000. O'Brien, Sr. said the Council received the ALICE report that says ~24% of families in Coventry are in



the working poor category. Is that how the students qualify for Title 1? Conant said there is probably some overlap. The reduced/free lunch program is the poverty indicator Title 1 uses.

Williams asked what is the enrollment and location of students we are responsible for. Williams has also been trying to find a list of employees and how many that list numbers. Petrone directed Williams to slide 4 of his presentation that breaks out enrollment. This year we missed the projection mark by 82 students. Parents of thirty-six students said they wanted to see how the year went so decided on the home school route. There have been a significant number of students that have come back into the system and other parents will finish out the school year with home schooling but will be sending their children back into the classroom come September. Historically, our projections have been off by only 2 - 3 students. The enrollment numbers up to March 1, 2021 are available on the website. Also, kindergarten enrollment was down by thirty-eight students. Williams said it is important that our schools have remained open. How many students were outsourced? Dr. Petrone said as of October 1, 2020 113 students were out of district at magnet, charter, special education, or technical schools. There are 80 children in the preschool program that is running at 80% capacity. The total students in the district enrolled is 1,602. Williams applauded the BOE for keeping the preschool open which is one of the few in the state that have done so.

Thomas confirmed with Petrone that those who opted to homeschool their children means they are not taking part in the remote learning programs.

O'Brien, Sr. asked with the uncertainty about enrollment in K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade how will that affect the Choice program. Petrone said that is like trying to make a decision about a snow day – we have to figure out how many openings those classes will have. We have the option to par the slots back. The minimum slots is one and the maximum is five.

Hand asked if the BOE has an idea of the number of staff and students that have contracted the virus since September and how many have had to quarantine. Petrone said a decision was made to notify parents when someone has tested positive and those cases are entered into the State's database. We have yet to confirm that any cases have been contracted in the schools. Hand said the decision was made to keep the schools open and there are many pros for that. But there are also cons. What/where is the liability? There is a data gap on that. This is a limited population that we are trying to keep track of. Ms. Beausoleil said Petrone sends out the email about cases and calls families that have to quarantine. This information does not identify the number of students and staff. The appropriate reporting of the cases is done. Eastern Highland keeps that data. The BOE is not required to keep a count. The State website has the number of cases by school. Mary Kortmann added if the number of cases is at or under five there is no count on the State's website.

Christina Williams said she is a parent in the district and the school district has done an amazing job of handling the quarantining. There are pros and cons in any

communications, quarantine, and testing. She could not be more pleased. Hand said he wants the data to visualize the whole picture.

O'Brien, Jr. said there is a regular increase for technology spending and software; \$20k is the anticipated need for the upcoming school year. Petrone said when State said the district must have a remote learning platform they had to get up to speed. ESSR II funds will be used toward that. O'Brien, Jr. asked if devices will be given to each student in all grades. Dr. Petrone said he does not know that yet. It may be that devices will stay in the schools except for the 6 – 12 grade levels but he does not know what the State will require. O'Brien, Jr. asked how much repair costs have climbed with students taking the devices home. Petrone said there has been a huge uptick because of the devices being carried back and forth but the Chromebooks are more durable and easier to repair with the Technology staff able to fix the devices unless the damage is extreme.

O'Brien, Sr. asked about the BOE Minutes reflecting a discussion to not apply the ESSR funds to this year but apply them over the next two years. Petrone said a spending freeze of anything over \$500 was imposed last September. We had some of the senior staff decide to take the year off from teaching along with extracurriculars staff not working (coaches, arts, drama productions) this past year that saved on salaries and intramural stipends. Right now the budget trending indicates we will be okay. We will use the ESSR II funds for summer school. Beausoleil said referring to the one-time vacancy savings and those who chose to take a leave of absence we did spend fewer dollars for long-term substitutes. The senior staff will come back at their previous salary level. As for sports and intramurals students like, thrive, and gives them incentive to learn to have these other programs in place. We do not want to cut those programs.

O'Brien, Sr. said the ESSR II spending for next year is listed as \$289,865. Petrone said it is for staff and expenditures at the high school with the majority falling under Special Education. The \$48k is a contractual increase for transportation next year. O'Brien, Sr. said he hopes the BOE looks for guidance from the Council with these funds and utilize the ESSR II funds for this budget and going forward. Petrone said if we use those funds in the operating budget for items that are not related to COVID-19 we will run into a budget cliff. The intention of the ESSR II funds is to make up for learning loss.

Williams asked what the actual expenditures were for substitutes and replacing the staff this year and what about substitutes for next year. Petrone said there will not be the need for substitutes at the same level as this year. We are keeping the funding level flat for substitutes next year. Williams asked if the absentee rate for teachers was about the same this year as in the past. Petrone said the staff has been wonderful; he did not see a surge in absences from staff. Dr. Petrone will get the absentee rate for Williams. Bob Carroll will run a report about the COVID-19 substitutes.

Elsesser said the BOE is asking for an increase in allocation for a network refresh from the capital budget. There is the need to replace aging equipment. That would go from

\$59,000 to \$71,600. An email was received this afternoon asking the Council to increase the line item for an Erate purchase from \$149k to \$179k. The BOE has three projects in the CIP – the tech refresh, the band room compressors, and the HVAC systems at GHR and CGS. The CIP narrative gives more detail.

8. **New Business:**

8.A. \* 20/21-62: **Appointment Of John Dittrich As Special Constable, Term To Expire April 16, 2023**

8.B. 20/21-63: **Consideration/Possible Action: Restore The Inland Wetlands Positions To the Town Hall Workforce And End The Outside Contract With North Central Conservation District**

Elsesser said a memo regarding this matter is in the agenda packet. There are significant capital projects that the Town Engineer, Todd Penney, needs to focus his time on. The options are to either hire out for the engineering work for these projects (costly) or relieve Penney of some of his duties. We have a contracted (through the North Central Conservation District) talented Wetlands person, Mindy Gosselin, who has been working part-time with Penney on Inland Wetlands. The suggestion is to increase her to 30 hours per week and move the position to the Town Hall work force. The union is requiring a typical job opening posting. Penney will remain the engineer for the IWA. As a staff position at 30 hours per week the additional cost, over what the contracted cost would be, is \$8,500 which the Town will benefit greatly from.

**Motion:** I move the Town be authorized to restore the Inland Wetlands positions to the Town Hall workforce and end the outsider contract with North Central Conservation District, effective upon agreement with the Local 1303-84 AFSMCE Union.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Elsesser said we have not had this position for a number of years. The job description has already been adopted although that says the position is under the direction of Land Use department.

**Motion Amended:** insert “under the direction of the Town Engineer” after “workforce”.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Backhaus said at the current ten hours per week contracted the annualized amount is \$30k – 35k. For the additional \$8,500 the Town gets the Wetlands Agent for triple the hours per week.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

**9. Miscellaneous/Correspondence:**

**9.A. \* Correspondence Emailed To Budgetcomments@Coventryct.org As Of 12 p.m.  
On March 11, 2021**

**9.B. \* Board Of Education: 2021-2022 Calendar**

**9.C. \* Board of Education: 2/25/21 Minutes; 3/11/2021 Agenda**

**10. Adjournment:**

**Motion:** I move that the Council adjourn at 9:57 p.m.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Hand

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

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.***

Richard Church  
336 Pucker St  
Coventry CT

During the Coventry Town Council meeting on March 1 2021, Council member Matt O'Brian Jr brought forward a resolution on political violence denouncing all forms of political violence in the United States. The proposed resolution states that attacks on American cities, businesses, government building and human lives have become more intensified and frequent during the past several months including but not limited to the attack on the U.S. Capital on January 6 2021. The resolution also states that political violence endangers the rights of all American's to peaceably assemble, to petition the government for a redress of grievances, to speak freely without fear of threat of injury or death, shuts down the dialog between opposing viewpoint and destroys the fabric of a peaceful society.

Council member Lisa Thomas and council member Jon Hand spoke on this resolution to have no urgency on political violence other than the one incident that happened at the U.S. Capital on January 6 2021, an attempted overthrow of the U.S government, an attempted coup. Council member Thomas and council member Hand referred to this resolution as too broad of a statement, very general, far reaching and a white wash of political violence.

Does council member Thomas and council member Hand not remember the radicals this past summer that burned down police station and government building, small businesses and homes, looted stores and damaged private property, harassed private citizens and the leftist contributed millions of dollars to bail out these rioters and prosecutors refused to convict?

Our towns, cities and states must be prepared to meet urgent public safety needs while simultaneously invest in upstream solution to address the underlying cause of crime and violence. This can be fixed if our elected officials and law makers start supporting the police instead of pandering to the activist crowd that is dividing us when we need unity.

If we are going to condemn violence then condemn all violence not just when it is politically correct to do so.

Thank you for your time and service to our community

Richard Church

March 14, 2021

Audience of Citizens Budget Support

To: Town Council Members

I am writing to indicate my support for the Town Manager's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. I believe that the proposed increase is reasonable, and I would like to thank all who have participated in the development of this proposed budget particularly Town Manager, John Elsesser, and School Superintendent, David Petrone. Coventry is very fortunate to have both of them; and I personally thank them for their leadership and innovative thinking.

I particularly would like to express my support for the \$300,000 bond proposal for the Girls' Softball Field and also the use of a future Steap Grant for this purpose. I am hopeful that Coventry citizens will have an opportunity to vote on the \$300,000; and I ask that Town Council members support this proposal.

I am also pleased that the Manager has proposed phasing out the use of Fund Balance "to fill the budget hole" over a three year period. \$310,000 was used in FY2021 and \$200,000 is included in the proposed budget. I know Council members are aware of how this affects our Bond rating. In the 2018-2019 budget, the Council that I chaired replaced funds taken from fund balance for sand and salt and snow removal (\$99,000) as well as lake management. We felt it important to stabilize fund balance so as not to see a negative effect on future borrowing.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Joan A. Lewis

48 Antrim Road  
Coventry, CT 06238

Phone: 860-742-3231  
[Joan-lewis@charter.net](mailto:Joan-lewis@charter.net)

## **Amanda Backhaus**

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**From:** cgmarabolos@charter.net  
**Sent:** Monday, March 15, 2021 11:55 AM  
**To:** Coventry Audience  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] AOC statement | March 15, 2021

Good evening

At the January 19, 2021 Town Council meeting, Councilwoman Lisa Conant read a statement on behalf of herself, Jon Hand, and Lisa Thomas condemning the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection at the United States Capitol. The events of that day were a direct assault on our democratic Republic, our elected leaders, and the democratic process that has ensured a peaceful transition of power throughout the history of our great nation.

With one exception, the Republican members of the Town Council voiced support for this non-partisan statement and, in fact, asked that it be formatted into a formal resolution that the Council could adopt.

Instead, what the citizens of Coventry received was a partisan resolution, completely different from the agreed-upon statement, that denounced all forms of political violence, a matter that has clear political undertones and which does not adequately address the truth of the insurrection that took place on January 6, 2021. This was sure to pass as the Republicans who authored the woefully inadequate resolution hold the majority. The minority Democrats refused to support a partisan resolution that amounted to a perversion of the original statement.

The Republican majority then used the outcome of this politically-motivated resolution to give themselves a collective pat on the back that appealed to their base.

Shame on the Republican members of the Coventry Town Council for using the Council table to put forth their political agenda.

I respectfully request that this statement be included in the minutes for tonight's meeting.

Carolyn Arabolos  
132 North Farms Road

