MINUTES
COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL
MARCH 18, 2020
TOWN HALL ANNEX
7:30 p.m.

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.
Matthew O’Brien, Sr. - Vice Chair - remote
Lisa Thomas
Richard Williams - Secretary

Members absent:

Also present: John Elsesser – Town Manager

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

3. Audience Of Citizens:
(30 minutes – 5 minutes maximum per citizen)

Elsesser read the following comments into the record that were received via email:

Addison Byam, 4013 South Street – Asked for consideration of building a new softball field for girls. Her statement is attached.

Emma Vertucci, 5th grader at GHR – Writing to ask for help in getting new softball fields so the current fields do not have to be shared. Her statement is attached.

Jennifer Rogers, 274 Hannah Lane – Chair of the Softball Field Committee writes in support of the CIP for softball fields. Her statement is attached.

Morgan Blouin, 891 South Street - She has been playing softball for 10 years. Mentioned issues with not having fields and the proper facilities to play on. Expressed thanks for finally addressing the need for recreational softball to have their own fields. Her statement is attached.

Julia – On behalf of the CHS softball team, accessible softball fields are a necessity for future players. Softball has provided positive situations. Her statement is attached.

McKenzie Rivers – She is president of Coventry Softball. With widespread community support she is writing in support of the CIP bonding for Coventry softball fields. Her
statement is attached.

Carol Chipkin, 454 Cassidy Hill Road – She discussed the Library project presently under consideration. Asked if the stated estimated cost of 2.4 million or 3 million will really be the cost and there are no guarantees that the stated repairs will repair the water problem. Her statement is attached.

Robert Chipkin, 454 Cassidy Hill Road – He wants to address the Booth & Dimock Library Renovation Committee’s recommendations. Spending to repair and expand the library has been unacceptable to Coventry voters in the past. He will vote against this and work against its passage. His statement is attached.

Joseph Jankowski, 3899 South Street – He has served on the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee. Reiterated some information presented by the committee to the Council two weeks ago. Urged the Council to embrace a long-term investment in the library. His statement is attached.

Hand read this email statement into the record:

Tom Swan, 155 Standish Road – His daughter has played softball and he has coached. It has been fifty years since the passage of Title IX and it is time to end the discrimination by passing the bonding for softball fields. His statement is attachment.

4. Acceptance Of Minutes:
March 2, 2020
Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the March 2, 2020 meeting.

By: Thomas Seconded: O’Brien, Jr.

With the following corrections:
- Page 1, Roll Call – add “Secretary” to Richard Williams.
- Page 4, item 8.B., first paragraph, fourth sentence – add “this” after “although”.
- Page 7, first sentence – change “interests” to “interest”.
- Page 7, third sentence – change “be” to “go”.
- Page 7, item 8.F.1., third paragraph, last sentence – add to the beginning “Blanchard asked how...”.
- Page 8, item 8.F.2., second paragraph, first sentence – begin with “One more item that came up today Elsesser...”.
- Page 9, item 10.A., fourth paragraph, second to last sentence – change “issue in” to “issues of”.
- Page 10, first paragraph, last sentence – change “Council moves” to Council to move”
- Page 10, second paragraph, fifth sentence – change “address” to “addresses”.
- Page 11, third paragraph – change “Down” to “Downes” throughout.
- Page 11, fourth paragraph, last sentence – remove the “s” from “elevators”.

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

March 9, 2020
Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the March 9, 2020 meeting.

By: Thomas Seconded: O’Brien, Jr.

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, Blanchard, O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Thomas, Williams
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 member 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: Thomas Seconded: O’Brien, Jr.

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

6. Reports:
6.A. Council Chairwoman: Julie A. Blanchard
There is a micro grid/cogeneration meeting coming up and we will get prices. Blanchard is appointing O’Brien, Sr. to attend this meeting. Elsesser added the BOE has asked to have a representative attend these meetings.

6.B. Council Members:
Thomas mentioned that a resident messaged her about possible fee waiver for online payments using a credit card. She asked Elsesser if this is something that can be done as a courtesy during this coronavirus period. Elsesser replied this has been discussed at a staff meeting with the feeling being that bills can be paid online without incurring a fee by using an echeck without a person having a Webster account. Building permits and Recreation registrations do have a convenience fee. Waiving fees would be a policy set by the Council. If such a policy is set the Town would have to send reimbursement checks as the fee is automatic from the credit card company. O’Brien, Sr. added payments by check can be mailed in.

Thomas was speaking to Sonia of Eye Trade. Sonia was expressing concern about this virus as a small business owner. Sonia was not aware of some of the program changes under the governor’s emergency declaration including flexibility in some unemployment insurance rules. Elsesser stated the governor’s office has sent press release. Some policy is still being fleshed out. It would be best to visit the governor’s web page for the latest information. Thomas stated this is serious and Sonja is trying to figure out how to keep the business
operational. Thomas can forward the links from the governor's website to Town Hall. Thomas asked if the EDC could help with this? Do they have a network of emails? Elsesser said we can try to do what we can do. Williams stated the rules are being adjusted such as cutting back on employees' hours and them having the ability to get partial unemployment payments. Elsesser added information coming out of Washington may override this such as two-weeks paid leave that will be available to small business. Everything is so fluid. Blanchard added we can share the governor's releases and suggest people go to that website. Williams suggests pointing people to the unemployment website. Elsesser commented that staff is quite overwhelmed right now. Elsesser added he is trying to keep his employees safe while residents are coming into the office for items that can be handled online. And to have the food bank running. Thomas replied that small businesses are important, too. The link for portal.ct.gov/coronavirus is already on the website. Thomas feels the press releases do not include all of the moving information. Thomas is not willing to berate small businesses for being in crises. Elsesser stated he is not berating them. Staff can emphasize the emergency orders and press releases making sure the website gets updated.

6.C. Finance Committee: Matthew O'Brien, Sr., Chairperson
O'Brien, Sr. did not attend the meeting. He did see the House and Senate approved the bonding package with the governor still having to sign it. And there will be a Bond Commission meeting.

Blanchard went over the Finance Director's report that is in line with last year. The BOE was asked how assets are inventoried and tracked, including electronic devices.


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

6.E. *COVRAA – John A. Elsesser:

6.F. Town Manager – John A. Elsesser
6.F.1. Projects Update
Elsesser realized the project memo was not enclosed; he will email it out to the Council members. Capital projects are moving along:
- Another meeting was held about the Swamp Road traffic signal redesign. The engineering cost for this of $22,000 will be added to the budget. DOT will be picking up the cost of the connector from Northfield Road to Swamp Road.
- The Folly Lane bridge is on the path of going out to bid.
- The grammar school parking lot is hitting a hiccup. The project was expected to start June 15th, but school is now expected to go to June 30th. We can phase the project or pay for additional fees to work longer hours and weekends. Dave Petrone reported the Commissioner has issued a letter to allow schools to end on time with online learning. Online learning is going to be in place quicker than anticipated; school will be in session during the scheduled April break. Elsesser said we are working through the side effects of these types of changes. We are developing solutions on the go. The project had a short six-week timeframe to begin with.
• Six firms showed up for the mandatory walk through for the unit ventilator. Now they have some time to develop questions to which answers will be given. Then bids will be submitted. There may be some level of construction this summer, such as the fire doors and asbestos removals from the schools. Summer construction projects are likely to be impacted. We will figure out what we can do in the limited construction period.
• Vendors are being lined up for the Northfield reconstruction. There will be catch basin work next week.

A PURA ruling was filed to get all the meters behind the master meter. This will allow for discounts. The Housing Authority also had to do this to support the ruling. We are hoping an engineer meeting is requested rather than a formal hearing requiring an attorney. The company wanted a sense of commitment from the Town and the BOE to be given to the three financial companies they are negotiating with. The construction estimates have to be fine-tuned.

6.F.3. COVID-19 Information
• Schools are closed until 3-31 although this is a fluid date.
• The Senior Center is closed in general. There is a reduced service level for rides to medical appointments and other special needs.
• The Fcud Bank worked out the amount of food currently stocked will last two weeks. Boxes will be prepared to be picked up at Town Hall. Contributions may be sought but we are not prepared right now to deal with that aspect.
• The school lunch program will start on Wednesday via direct contact with the forty-six parents responded. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.
• We are trying to delay closing Town Hall as long as possible. People should not visit the offices for tasks that can be accomplished online or over the phone. Two employees are in self-quarantine. The employees do not have symptoms. Test results from the person they were in contact with are pending.
• The state Public Health lab handles very few tests per day at ~50. Hospitals and private sectors are stepping up.
• Departments have been asked for work from home plans.
• The VPN is being beefed up for payrolls and the transfers of monies for BOE and payables.

O'Brien, Jr. asked if the signing of the bonding package be delayed, would there be a delay in the planned road construction? Elsesser does not believe so. If the bonding does not come forward we will have tough decisions to make. We expect the governor's office is trying to get the package through. STEEP money will be for economic development projects, not recreation. The CT Water tower project to provide sprinklers and hydrants in the Village would fall under economic development.

Motion: I move the Council move agenda item 7.A.1 – Board of Education budget presentation to 8:25 p.m.

By: Thomas Seconded: Williams
Motion: I move the Council hear agenda item 7.B. next.

By: Thomas                Seconded: Williams

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

6.F.4. UConn Internship & Professional Practice (PP) Program
Elsesser reminded the Council they gave him permission to submit to the program. If
the desired candidate is interested in working with the town, funding would have to be
found. The process for selection is being shared. Elsesser believes funding has been
found and a proposal to transfer funds will be on the next meeting agenda. Should the
request go to the Finance subcommittee, as usual, or the transfer of funds not be
approved at the next Council meeting, Elsesser may not get his top intern pick.
O’Brien, Sr. asked if the intern would be on site. Elsesser replied yes and there would
be a contract with UConn under the program.

6.F.5. Bond Capacity
Elsesser stated this can go to the Finance subcommittee. There may a small portion
that can be refinanced and that may be beneficial. Hill Top Security sent out
information that no one is buying bonds in the municipal bond market that they think
may be a fluke.

7. Unfinished Business:
7.A. 19/26-51: FY20/2021 Budget
1. Board of Education (7:45 p.m.)
Those present:
David Petrone, Superintendent of Schools
Bob Carroll, Coventry Public Schools Director of Finance & Operation
Jen Beausoleil, BOE Chairman,
Mary Kortmann, BOE member
Gene Marchand, BOE Secretary
Robert Williams, BOE member

Beausoleil made a statement about the thought-provoking events of late. These are
unprecedented times on uncharted waters for global events. Coventry has two
great leaders in John Elsesser and David Petrone. They are making plans and in
support of their teams in this evolving crises.

The presentation was supported by the variety of materials containing the
requested information that was sent to the Council.
Blanchard asked Petrone to go over the information to show how he came to the increase. What were the major drivers and decreases? Petrone stated several retirements brought down salaries, health insurance went up, some is based on contracted numbers, and support staff reduction was realized with a change in the delivery model. More research is being done to recognize savings by doing business differently. Tuition fees are realized by bringing students back into the system. The increase is 1.96%.

Elsesser added Coventry is self-insured. An email was received today stating with Covid-19 we should not think about cutting insurance. We have to decide whether to pay for virus testing or not. We do have the right to opt out but that is not the right thing to do. Testing is expensive and we pay for that. There a little pressures on hidden items that we have to make quick decisions on. Elsesser made this decision at 5:30 tonight without input from the BOE. People will want to be tested. Petrone stated the increase is 1.39% before health insurance costs.

Council member Williams asked in regards to this year’s budget and what is happening with students attending different school districts during the schools shut down? Petrone stated they are trying to work through this without much guidance from the State. For instance, Coventry pays for a student to attend a Colchester school we would have to work out compensatory services and transportation costs for the period schools are closed. Information is fluid and changing hourly. We are concentrating on getting distance learning going and special education services while doing the best to provide those services. The school year has to be wrapped up by June 30th. We have to stay within the budget year; salaries for teachers could be problematic. We did not budget for additional summer resources. As most teachers are in a union the contractual obligation is to fill 187 days. This applies to the preschool staff also. Petrone stated 244 students (14% of the district student population) need special education services. There is so much to think about for every department. A waiver had to be signed that we would certify equitable services for all services for distance learning. Occupational, physical, and the medically fragile students (25% of the population) have very different learning patterns. Assignments are being modified to be simpler. The State has recommended a hard close for two weeks although the schools will probably be closed longer.

Elsesser added he sees state agencies trying to make things work during this period rather than sticking to what is on paper. Petrone agreed it is incredible about the changes that are being made, such as no longer having to go until June 30th. Council member Williams asked isn’t the goal of educating children? This class will miss out. Is there some sense of the school year going beyond June 30th and doing half days? Petrone stated this would be a decision made at the state level. There would be a budgeting issue for teachers to continue beyond the budget year. Council member Williams stated this situation is unprecedented so why not move the school year. Petrone replied there is no end date right now. The state is urging distance or online learning. We have to do a good enough job with that to keep students learning, active, and engaged. This situation puts everyone at a disadvantage. Perfect does not exist. This is nationwide. Council member Williams feels the solution is for the school year to go longer. Petrone suggested we don’t know that. The challenge is the budget year and the contracts for
teachers for when the school year starts and ends. There will be a price tag so students don’t lose out.

Thomas stated it has been a solid school year so far. Students are now involved in online learning during the day. When students come back to schools assessments will be done to see where they are, as is done each new school year. College kids have a bunch of classes online. College students are used to this type are learning. Students are more resilient than they are being given credit for. For some students it will be a challenge. If there were a hard date this may all be different. We need to buckle down and make this work. The teachers are dedicated. Most of the challenges have been thought through or are being worked out.

Council member Williams stated in some ways schools are childcare when parents are out working. Without the schools their expenditure is doubled. Petrone stated in reality many businesses are allowing work from home. For those parents able to do this it will not be an extra monetary burden. However, not all parents can work from home. It is an issue and something to be aware of. Thomas added there was much preparation last week before decisions were made. Google Classrooms were set up, parents are setting up activities and sharing resources. There is a lot of coming together in the community. Beausoleil stated we have to be aware of inequities. Some parents are not as tech savvy as others. We don’t want to create an inequity that presents challenges for the future. Petrone reported the survey sent to school families resulted in 900 responses with 96% having access to the internet in the home. Twenty-eight families don’t have internet access and utilities offering this service have programs now for free or a small fee.

Petrone added 26% of students are in the free or reduced lunch program. Council member Williams asked if that mirrors the income statistics? Petrone replied the ALICE guideline for a family is $74,000 and it does mirror that.

Blanchard stated this is doubling the increase asked for last year. Encumbrances for the end of the last school year was $500,000 and seemed like it had to do with supplies, such as computers and instructional materials. This was for supplies ordered in the school year that were not delivered until after the year end, therefore, they had not been paid for. Carroll stated electricity is one of the high monthly costs at $18,000-$20,000. O’Brien, Sr. can provide more detail about the open invoices for instructional supplies in writing. Backhaus stated it would be best to pose the question via email and an answer provided. The slides from last week’s budget hearing are available online; the video will be posted soon.

Council member Williams asked how we track the owned assets? Beausoleil stated by serial number, the item type, and where it is assigned. This is everything from desks, to computers, to shelving, etc. Teachers have to sign off on all of the equipment in their room. The report will tell you exactly where all pieces of equipment is located. Council member Williams came up with almost 3,000 computers. Petrone can send the report to the Council. Some of those computers will be switches. The equipment for the preschool is paid for between the preschool fund and the school district. The district has a legal obligation to support the preschool. Replacement of doors, carpets, and tiles is being paid for 100% by the preschool fund. The right thing to do is a 60/40 split. Petrone
provided a copy of the computer replacement plan. Chromebooks used by students have a life of four years; those on the carts have a life of six years. Some will be left obsolete and not be replaced. Council member Williams feels 223 iPads and 71 Chromebooks at CGS is a lot. Petrone stated this is a big organization with 1,700 students. We are holding our own in the obligation to put tech in kid’s hands. What is going on now is all tech related. Computers are purchased over the summer because they have to be imaged and inventoried. Chromebooks are more durable and less expensive than iPads so we are moving away from those.

Blanchard stated we have paying parents in the preschool. Are they going to be looking for a discount? Petrone is encouraging them to have the fees applied to next month. If they are not comfortable with that option they will be paid out. Tuition paying parents will get their money back. We have the obligation to teach special education students. The details are still be worked out on all of this. Elsesser stated this event is incredibly challenging. Petrone met with staff and mentioned indicating given today are going to be different tomorrow. We are trying topace ourselves in the right way as things are continually changing.

Beausoleil reported East Conn is recommending the Coventry school system to other districts. O’Brien, Sr. asked if these out of district students are special needs students or regular learners? Petrone stated the majority are special education students; some have short stints; some are regular learners that have been expelled from school.

Council member Williams asked what the arrangement is with the softball fields? Elsesser replied there are large high school fields. One is used for the middle school teams and for gym class. The Town does the mowing and infield maintenance. The Town is not responsible to fix issues with the fields. The softball rec teams added backdrops, electricity, and installed plugs in the pitching mounds that were not installed to standard or done improperly. Who is going to fix what was installed incorrectly? The Town does not have the budget for fixing facilities. It is not in the agreement just like we don’t fix the track. The town did install the drainage for the three fields at the school complex. The fields are in high demand and school sports have the scheduling priority. Softball used to be a spring only sport. Now it is played in three seasons. Depending on the weather the fields get beat up quickly. None of the fields were usable until May and cancellations piled up. The drainage in both of these fields seemed to be working as no puddling was observed in the Fall. The frost is out of the ground now and we don’t see puddling. We are thinking they will be in better condition and can be prepped for play. The season has not yet started and, as of today, everything has stopped. If a school team game is rained out a girls’ softball game will be bumped for rescheduling. A field at the back is used for boy’s recreation and the middle school baseball team plays there. Rec has a regional traveling team that plays there. That field has the distance and could be repurposed for softball as there is a different mound type. You can’t change the middle school baseball field. We built that field twenty years ago for that purpose.

Petrone stated the last seven budgets have been under a 2% increase. With this budget we can continue to do the work we have been doing. There have been incredible gains and we have the right resources in the right places. We would
hate to lose the ground that has been gained. Students are benefiting from the
school system. This district is being recognized across the nation more than ever.

The Capital budget for FY2021 is $3,030,000. $2.5 million is for the roof
replacement. Elsesser stated it is doubtful we will get the 53-10 grant. Backhaus
reported the van cannot be used to pick up or drop off students at the schools as this
is considered school transportation. The 53-10 grant is designed for senior citizens
or vocational training. Pick up/drop off from schools will result in the van
purchase not being funded even though it would be used outside of school hours.
Petrone asked what if the students are picked up/dropped off at an alternate
location such as the Administration building or Town Hall? Elsesser stated we
will try that tactic. The new van is exclusively for the elderly for four years. The
band room at the middle/high school complex is leaking especially in heavy rain.
Solar panels were kept off certain areas of the roof because it is aging out. In
1999, the roof was bid out for a 20-year and 30-year lifespan. The 20-year bid was
chosen because of the price difference. The $2.5 million estimate was from Bill
Trudel. Roof replacement cannot be done this year because we have to get an
architect on board to design the plans before getting an estimate. Such an estimate
and choice of vendor has to happen early in the year for summer work. This will
be eligible for school construction reimbursement while meeting other
requirements. The replacement has been moved up a year because of the leaks that
have started. The three-zone alarm system was installed when the complex was
built. We have been trying to buy refurbished parts for this 20-year old system.
More sprinklers are required per building code because the complex is actually
three buildings. Blanchard asked if the fire alarm replacement can happen this
summer? Elsesser replied some design work is needed and it might be eligible for
school construction reimbursement. Although it is more beneficial sometimes to
do a project yourself. This project might be able to be done during the school year
with nights, weekends, and holiday work. The fire alarm project is budgeted at
$180,000. O’Brien, Sr. asked if the roof leak is significant? Do we need to make
temporary repairs? Will waiting cause significant damage? Petrone stated we
have made Band-Aid repairs and are trying to track where the leaks are coming
from. We have been replacing ceiling tiles that are damaged during a heavy rain or
a rain event over multiple days. There is potential for more damage being done.
We have been addressing it with in-house maintenance without significant damage
being caused. We have moved the replacement project up by a year. O’Brien, Sr.
56 will trust Petrone to be prudent about the issues.

O’Brien, Jr. asked what the network upgrades entail? Petrone stated these are key
switches and lab computers. Elsesser added there was a crisis when the master
controller came up with the Black Voodoo virus. We are keeping good track of
the equipment but not keeping good track of its age. Items were previously
replaced when they broke rather than at the expected life of each item. The Town
and BOE share the Microsoft Exchange server and the VOIP phone system.
Firmware, being the standard fixed set of coding embedded in the device, gets old
and stops talking to newer firmware. O’Brien, Jr. said it sounds like the fire alarm
system has the same issue about updating it. If a part fails it has to be tracked
down for replacement. If the fire alarm system is not working we have to pay a
custodian to walk around to make sure there are no fires. Most of the issues have
been in the circuit board, although last time it was the motherboard. The alarms
still work so the custodian can pull one if s/he spots a fire. O’Brien, Sr. added there will be more functionality with a new fire alarm system.

Blanchard requested information about adding security film to the schools’ windows. Petrone wrote a grant for this. They were funded to do two schools. That money will be used for the middle/high school complex. However, the film is on the vestibules of all schools. This is a matching grant. The grant is ready to be submitted when they decide to open the program.

Hand expressed appreciation for the hard work needed to put together the budget and serve the needs of the students. This represents hard work and he is not seeing a lot of fluff. Hand is highly supportive of this budget.

O’Brien, Jr. stated the van cost is $62,000; the grant is for $50,000. If we don’t get the grant we will have to find the money or remove $12,000 from the budget. The van would need to pass an inspection and we may buy one that is slightly smaller, like the one for the seniors as it will be a little less costly. Backhaus added the original van suggested was higher cost. The smaller one would still have the capacity for the students. The new senior van rides better and is built better.

Thomas asked if the social workers are sufficient to meet the needs and do teachers feel they will receive help if called for? Petrone stated for a district of our size we are in good shape. The teachers are comfortable that help is available when called for. This is a challenging and delicate dance. We are redesigning programs with the same bucket of money. The last seven budgets have not been over a 2% increase and we have been getting results. Beausoliel added we are adding a district wide social worker so we are not burning out our staff. If is difficult to hire mid-year if needs change and it is about the equal distribution of case load. The issues are real and damaging.

Blanchard addressed Carroll about the balance being $200,000. That is brought down to $100,000 after the cafeteria project. Kortmann stated the remaining money would cover a catastrophe and we would not want to go lower.

2. General Administration
Elsesser suggested holding off on this item.

3. Remainder of Public Works
Backhaus suggested this can be removed from further discussion.

4. Sundry
Elsesser suggested holding off on this item.

7.B. 19/20-54: Consideration/Possible Action: Adoption of Coventry Fire & EMS Proposed Job Descriptions (Previously Distributed)
Jim McLoughlin, Emergency Management Director, Fire & EMS Administrator, was present. McLoughlin stated the Fire Transition Study Committee and the Board of Fire Officers held a joint meeting. A motion was made and accepted unanimously by both teams to use the existing job descriptions for the interim period not to exceed one year with the interim officers having to substantially meet
the job requirements of the position they are appointed. O'Brien, Sr. asked if the person substantially meets the requirements, but may not necessarily meet the educational requirement is the intent they will be working toward those? McLoughlin replied in the affirmative. There are mandatory requirements, those that are nice to have, and the requirement to achieve the certification level within one year.

Motion: I move the Council accept the job descriptions with the understanding applicants substantially meet the requirements.

By: Hand                    Seconded: O'Brien, Sr.

Discussion: Thomas asked if it is typical that a fire chief live in the community they are serving? Elsesser answered this is a matter of determination by the municipality. Some have a residency requirement and others have a certain radius from the town borders. The fire departments have their own rules. O'Brien, Jr. read there is a residency requirement in the job descriptions. That is correct for the upper level positions on a permanent basis. There is the possibility that a person appointed to an interim position not be a resident, but should s/he want to be considered for the permanent position they have a year to establish residency. McLoughlin agreed this is a possibility. A joint meeting to address the three departments policies will bring forth a recommendation on this matter.

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

8. New Business:
8.A. 19/20-55: Consideration/Possible Action: Ratification Of Appointment Of Human Services Administrator
Elsesser spoke of candidate Anna Marie Sundgren. She has worked in Bristol since 2014 in a similar position. Elsesser read some information from her resume. The panel felt she was the right candidate. Sundgren has knowledge in working with outside agencies. Elsesser stated there is a warmth to her; she has a strength to her that is needed for this position.

Motion: I move the Council ratify the appointment of Human Service Administrator, Anna Marie Sundgren.

By: O'Brien, Sr.                    Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Elsesser stated her start date is April 20th. Her starting salary of $70,000 is significantly higher than her current one. Sundgren does many housing evictions in Bristol; Coventry does several and these are difficult. Coventry will provide her with the opportunity to run a larger department and go back to her experience of working with schools. That connection needs to grow in town.

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

8.B. 19/20-56: Consideration/Possible Action: Acceptance Of Conveyances, 8 Standish Road
Elsesser reported two properties were sold off in a tax sale. This is for a conditional setback to be reserved for the future sidewalk project.

Motion: I move the Council accept the conveyances at 8 Standish Road.
By: Hand  Seconded: Conant

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

9. Miscellaneous/Correspondence:
9.A. *Board of Education: Minutes, February 27, 2020; Agenda, March 12, 2020

10. 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, John Elsesser, and Amanda Backhaus.

By: Thomas  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 contains described in subsection (b) of Section 1-210 with the following people in attendance the seven Council members, John Elsesser, and Amanda Backhaus.

By: Thomas  Seconded: O’Brien, Jr.

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

The Council entered Executive Session at 10:21 p.m.
The Council exited Executive Session at 10:43 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT:
Motion: I move that the Council adjourn at 10:43 p.m.

By: Thomas
Seconded: O’Brien, Sr.

Voting:
For: Hand, Ccnant, 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.
Hi my name is Addison Byam I live at 4013 south st. I’m in 3rd grade and I love playing softball for Coventry. Please consider building new soft ball field’s for us girls who work really hard. It is not fare to us, because we play on fields that have poor playing conditions most of the season. Last spring we were unable to play multiple games because of the drainage problem. Thank you so much for taking care of that issue. When you only have eight games in a season losing a few of them is a lot. I currently play softball spring summer and fall. I would love for our town to have the fields to be able to play three seasons. We deserve to play all sports too. Help us play softball. Thank you

Addison Byam
3rd Grader at GHR
My name is Emma Vertucci, and I'm in 5th grade at GHR. This is my 5th year playing Coventry softball, and I love it.

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My older brother plays Coventry baseball. They have really nice fields at Miller Richardson. They have nice dugouts, fences, scoreboards, and one of the fields even has a stand where they can announce the players from. The fields are close together so you can watch other games when you are there. They even have real bathrooms and a snack shack. When I go to my brother's games I can always find friends there to play catch or watch other games with. He doesn't like coming to my games because there is nothing for him to do.

I think it's unfair that we don't have better fields. Please consider building new and improved softball fields for the girls here.

Thank You,

Emma Vertucci
To whom it may concern,
Please read this statement during the audience of citizens this evening at the Town Council meeting.

Thank you

Jennifer Rodgers
274 Hannah Lane

On behalf of the Softball Field Committee, we are submitting this brief statement in support of the Capital Improvement Plan Bonding for the Coventry Softball Fields. Our committee will participate in the Parks and Recreation budget presentation during the Town Council meeting next week and look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Rodgers
Chair Softball Field committee
Hi my name is Morgan Blouin I live at 891 South St. I'm 15 years old, I've been playing softball in Coventry for the past 10 years. It's my favorite sport to play and watch. And I've made so many friends over the years on the field.

Since I was 5 I've played on spring and fall teams. Even when it wasn't my game or practice I was still at the field for my younger sister. We have spent so much time playing, practicing, and maintaining these 3 fields.

Over the years we have won banners from all star teams. But we have nowhere to hang them due to us not being allowed to keep them on the fences on school fields. The dugouts and bathrooms at the middle school fields have been embarrassing to have other towns visit for years. There also hasn't been electricity causing the girls to have to use numerous extension cords that are plugged into the preschool.

I also wanted to mention that last summer I spent countless hours asking local businesses for donations for the golf tournament. Which we raised over $15,000 to be split between Coventry High School Softball and Coventry Little League Softball. I was surprised and frustrated to learn that between concessions and sponsor banners baseball makes more than that in a year at Miller Richardson field. And they don't have to put in hours and hours on fundraising.

Thank you all so much for finally addressing the need for rec softball to have their own fields. I hope that future generations enjoy that they get their own fields to call home.

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Sent: Monday, March 16, 2020 5:18 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Coventry Softball
Attachments: Coventry Softball.pdf
On behalf of the Coventry High School softball team, accessible softball fields are a necessity for future softball players who aspire to be a part of such a devoted community within Coventry softball. Kids who wish to be a part of a softball team need to be provided with fields where they can be able to practice, develop new skills, make new friends, and learn to love the sport as much as our team does. Without access to functioning softball fields, these children aren't attaining the full experience that softball has provided for many of us throughout our years of playing.

Growing up playing softball, we were all provided with those possibilities because we were given a variety of fields to play on at the middle school and high school fields. Over time those fields have crumbled, and our players now have to share one field among everyone in the softball program. The younger generation of softball players should be able to have the same experience we were granted as children, because it allowed us to become involved and receive opportunities we never would have encountered if it wasn't for having access to multiple practice fields.

The access to fields that we were granted as kids has allowed us to be involved in so many opportunities. For example, within four years, our high school team has made it to the quarterfinals three times and semifinals twice, while also making it to the NCCC Conference tournament every year. Softball has provided us with so many positive situations that we never could have had if we weren't given an opportunity to play freely on our own fields.
From: Mackenzie Rivers <mackenzie.rivers@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2020 3:58 PM
To: [EXTERNAL] Coventry Softball Capital Improvement Bonding

Subject: Coventry Audience

Hello, my name is Mackenzie Rivers and I the president of Coventry Softball. With widespread community support I write to you on behalf of the players, parents and volunteers of our wonderful organization. Given the health and safety directives of a no in person meeting I am submitting our public comment in support of the capital improvement bonding of the Coventry softball fields.

Our ultimate goal as a program is to provide the best experience for our players. We want them to come back year after year. Having a field that is safe and playable is one way to do that. Soccer, baseball and football (when we had a team) all had a place to call home and now the time has come for softball to have that same opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Mackenzie Rivers
Coventry Softball
To Coventry Town Council March 16, 2020

My name is Carol Chipkin, I live at 454 Cassidy Hill Rd.

I would like to discuss the Library project presently under consideration.

According to their minutes the Library Commission is asking for: replacing insulation, repairing floor joists, replacing all windows, new HVAC, new electrical, new roofing and storm water drainage, new plumbing, new insulation, new floors, and new exterior walls for the Booth and Dimock Library. These requests indicate the whole building will be taken down to the studs leaving only a shell of a building. You are also hoping that you will not have to replace structural items, but due to the years of water leaks that is undoubtedly wishful thinking. Do you truthfully think it will cost $2.4 million or even $3 million?

If you have a car valued at $1000.00 that did not run and a repair shop estimate of $5000.00 with no guarantees that the car would run, would you pay for the repairs? No one would, but this is exactly what you are asking the tax payers in Coventry to do. You are asking the taxpayers to pay $2.4 million on a building you do not own with no guarantee that the water intrusion will be fixed. You are asking the taxpayers to okay repairs on the library knowing that the total cost of repairs will never be as low as $2.4 million. Millions in new expenditures will still leave us with an aging facility, with the same circulation size, same collection size, same programs, same building size, parking problems and increased mill rates for decades.
To the Coventry Town Council (March 16, 2020)

My name is Robert Chipkin, and I reside at 454 Cassidy Hill Road. I would like to address the Booth & Dimock Library Renovation Committee’s recommendations.

As I’ve stated before, any new multi-million-dollar library spending for repairing and expanding the Booth and Dimock library will be unacceptable to Coventry voters, as has been proven by multiple rejections of such proposals in the past. I will certainly vote against an additional $2.4 million spending proposal, and will actively work against its passage, should it again come to referendum.

Better at this point is to recognize that the present building and location are no longer suitable to maintain as a town library, much less as meeting and event spaces. It’s time to thank the existing committee for their work but recommend against any new spending on Booth and Dimock. Rather, it’s time to consider possible other town spaces for a smaller facility, one more conventionally focused on books and periodicals, and consider using other different town spaces for meetings and events.

Please remember your responsibilities to voters to keep spending and taxes low to prevent Coventry homeowners and businesses from exiting to more tax friendly environments.
Please read this statement into the record at the Coventry Town Council meeting on March 16, 2020. I have also attached the statement as a Word document if that format is preferable. Thank you. - Joe Jankowski

Statement from Joseph Jankowski. 3899 South St. Coventry, CT

Two weeks ago, on March 2, 2020, the Town Council received an update from the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee. This committee, on which I serve, has been working on a plan to address issues at the Booth & Dimock Memorial Library for over a year, having met 20 times since February 14, 2019.

The purpose of this committee, approved by unanimous vote of the Town Council in December 2018 (with revisions in January, February and March 2019) is to address issues of the Booth & Dimock Memorial Library. Renovations for necessary upgrades and refreshing electrical, technology infrastructure, energy updates, code compliance, adequate bathrooms, parking, operational efficiency and the need to address water intrusion in its facility. The Town Council also approved by unanimous vote funds for architectural consulting services needed for the committee to address these issues.

The committee has bipartisan representation, but its work has been apolitical. The members of the committee have approached its charge with the idea of Coventry making an investment in one of our town’s most valuable community resources. The charge given to the committee has been its guiding principle – working within the existing footprint of the library to formulate a plan to make renovations and improvements for these necessary upgrades. And the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee has done that.
The update presented to the Town Council two weeks ago included this information:

- The plan presented addresses all of the issues in the charge and greatly improves the operational efficiency of the library.

- In addition, the plan’s renovation and improvement of the community room will allow for its use by town groups outside of library hours.

- The plan was reviewed by the Connecticut State Library and is eligible for an $850,000 grant. This grant was awarded based on the holistic renovation plan presented. An alternative piece-meal approach of making only some of the needed repairs and upgrades would not be eligible for this $850,000 grant.

- The $1.55 million investment made by Coventry for this renovation and improvement plan represents 65% of its value to our town. The grant would cover 35% of the cost of the project.

- The Connecticut State Library grant has a November 2020 deadline. The Town Council must move this plan forward before then or the $850,000 grant to fund the project will no longer be available to Coventry.

I urge the Town Council to embrace the idea of making a long-term investment in one of Coventry’s most valuable community resources and to move the plan presented by the Library Renovation & Improvement Committee forward in time to meet the November 2020 deadline.

Thank you.
This letter was read ard should be attached to minutes

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lisa Thomas <lisadthomas.13@gmail.com>
Date: March 16, 2020 at 7:52:46 PM EDT
To: John Elsasser <jelsasser@coventryct.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: FW: Comments on tonight's meeting

------- Forwarded message -------
From: <tswan@igc.org<mailto:tswan@igc.org>>
Date: Mon, Mar 16, 2020 at 5:39 PM
Subject: FW: Comments on tonight's meeting
To: Lisa Thomas <lisadthomas.13@gmail.com<mailto:lisadthomas.13@gmail.com>>, jonathan hand <jonathan_hand@yahoo.com<mailto:jonathan_hand@yahoo.com>>

In case it doesn't go through

From: tswan@igc.org<mailto:tswan@igc.org> <tswan@igc.org<mailto:tswan@igc.org>>
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2020 5:12 PM
To: "audience@coventryct.org<mailto:audience@coventryct.org>"
Subject: Comments on tonight's meeting

My name is Tom Swan, I live 155 Standish Road and have been a resident of Coventry for over 20 years. For the last three years my daughter has been fortunate enough to participate in Coventry softball and the last two I have been lucky enough to be an assistant coach. Through her participation she has learned about teamwork, developed wonderful friendships and built greater confidence. It is the type of community building activity every town strives for and every kid deserves.

The lack of dedicated fields has made it harder for family members to support her and her teammates.

It is nearly 50 years since the passage of Title IX, which promised girls equal access and sporting opportunities. As my daughter is starting to teach her 2 year old brother to swing a bat, I can't imagine telling her that she didn't deserve the equal chance he will have when it comes playing fields.

Coventry has such amazing parks and recreation opportunities. It is time we end this embarrassment of discrimination. Please pass the bonding package and let the girls PLAY BALL.

Thank you.

Lisa Thomas
Exploratory Candidate for State Senate, 2020 at LisaForEasternCT.com<https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?u=https%3A%2F%2FLisaForEasternCT.com&c=E,12VqozrJh-Gkow6X50adk2E7uXR1pCG-uYysopskv78Bm1HR15HYTnATR4wYklVSSSEq2YwBC1dUrBHT126Kz5ysQ2oa8Hy1Wg38BpaA2rSBembA.,&type=0>

Coventry Town Councilwoman
Coventry Democratic Town Committee
Connecticut Democratic State Central Committee women, 35th Senate District
860.930.7303

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Hi my name is Addison Byam I live at 4013 south st. I’m in 3rd grade and I love playing softball for Coventry. Please consider building new soft ball field’s for us girls who work really hard. it is not fair to us, because we play on fields that have poor playing conditions most of the season. Last spring we were unable to play multiple games because of the drainage problem. Thank you so much for taking care of that issue. When you only have eight games in a season losing a few of them is a lot. I currently play softball spring summer and fall. I would love for our town to have the fields to be able to play three seasons. We deserve to play all sports too. Help us play softball. Thank you

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Thank You,
Emma Vertucci
From: Jennifer Rodgers <jrogers334@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2020 6:03 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Audience of Citizens statement

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Date: March 16, 2020 at 7:52:48 PM EDT
To: John Elsesser <jelesesser@coventryct.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: FW: Comments on tonight's meeting

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From: <tswan@igc.org><mailto:tswan@igc.org>>
Date: Mon, Mar 16, 2020 at 5:39 PM
Subject: FW: Comments on tonight's meeting
To: Lisa Thomas <lisadthomas.13@gmail.com><mailto:lisadthomas.13@gmail.com>>, jonathan hand <jonathan_hand@yahoo.com><mailto:jonathan_hand@yahoo.com>>

In case it doesn’t go through

From: tswan@igc.org<mailto:tswan@igc.org> <tswan@igc.org><mailto:tswan@igc.org>>
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2020 5:12 PM
To: audience@coventryct.org<mailto:audience@coventryct.org>, audience@coventryct.org<mailto:audience@coventryct.org>
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Lisa Thomas
Exploratory Candidate for State Senate, 2020 at LisaForEasternCT.com<https://linkprotect.cc/dasvc.com/url?a=https%3A%2F%2FlisaforEasternCT.com&c=E.1_ZVqpxhJh-Gkow083k0ad2x2E7uXR1pC-uyvycpsKPl8u8Mr1H5HYtnATR4wYKLVSSEq2iYWBCldLiBHvT126Kz5ysQ2oa6Hy1WgB6BpaA2tSBemBA,,&typo=J>
Coventry Town Councilwoman
Coventry Democratic "own Committee
Connecticut Democratic State Central Committee woman, 35th Senate District
860.990.7295
"You promote what you tolerate"

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