1. **Call To Order, Roll Call:**
   The meeting was called to order by O’Brien, Sr. at 7:__ p.m.

   Members present:
   Julie Blanchard – Ex-officio
   Matthew O’Brien, Sr. - Chair
   Lisa Thomas
   Richard Williams

   Members absent:

   Also present:
   John Elsesser – Town Manager
   Amanda Backhaus – Finance Director
   David Petrone – Superintendent of Schools
   Gene Marchand – BOE Secretary
   Bob Carroll – BOE Director of Finance & Operations
   Jen Beausoleil – BOE Fiscal Committee Ex-officio
   Barbara Pare – BOE Fiscal Committee
   Mary Kortmann – BOE Fiscal Committee

2. **Discussions With Board Of Education Fiscal Committee (Invited):**
   O’Brien, Sr. reported the Town Council discussed the possible goal for the budget. Due to the terrible circumstances we are all facing, we are targeting a no-growth budget. How can the Town Council and the BOE work to make that happen? O’Brien, Sr. wants to first talk about the impact of Executive Order 7r and the opportunity to negotiate with the BOE transportation and special education companies.

   Beausoleil commented the business office is working with other Boards of Ed for the best way to negotiate. We don’t have a position of strength. We have to be creative in speaking to the bus companies. Petrone has asked for a detailed breakdown from M&J Bus for the basic transportation program, which is to and from school only per the executive order. That will be the place to start negotiating from. Beausoleil added there is no mention of arbitration or mediation in the order. She does not think there will be dramatic savings. The order mentions salaries, health insurance, and the fleet. Backhaus feels there is a negotiable aspect. There is no penalty if the company decides not to negotiate. Petrone is asking the bus company to attest to the information that will be forthcoming. O’Brien, Sr. feels if the drivers are on unemployment Coventry should not be liable for paying on the salary amount. Petrone agrees with this. Williams commented that unemployment payments may exceed what the drivers would have made for the profession. This is an interesting problem. Kortmann mentioned the State has not figured out how to give out the extra $600 if someone is on unemployment; this is a retroactive payment when the State figures out how to pay that amount out. Petrone added we are taking the same approach to EastConn, the
transportation company for special education. Special Education has to provide what they are providing at some expense because it is not going to be at the same level we entered the contract at. O’Brien, Sr. mentioned the executive order is clear that we pay only for salaries and health insurance. Petrone agreed and BOE is asking for the documentation to be sure we are paying out for only those categories we should be. There needs a process in place to validate what services are being provided during this time. There is some question about the definition of what fleet means and the associated costs. O’Brien, Sr. suggested using a proportional amount of the required payments since these companies provide services to other towns. Petrone stated it would be easier to break this down by the number of hours they are providing to Coventry. Thomas asked Petrone if other towns are doing the same in talking about hours of services provided? Petrone indicated that other towns are using this approach, too. Also, if the parent feels the child has regressed there should be compensation for the future services that should normally be provided and removes some liability from the Town. What is allowable for administrative costs is also mentioned in the executive order. Pare is in agreement with Petrone’s actions to move this forward. We are taking a thoughtful approach and validating the information being asked for as the jumping off point, but this will take time. O’Brien, Sr. asked the projections be done through the end of the school year should schools remain closed after the current projection of May 20, 2020. Thomas thanked the BOE for staying on top of the executive orders. Beausoleil added the transportation issues is a good example of how executive orders are changing. We have to be careful about projecting too far in the future as executive orders continue to be issued. The BOE voted at the last meeting to turn over 50% of COVID-19 expenses recouped to the general fund at the end of the fiscal year. The other 50% goes into the 1% fund for expenses that may be incurred over the summer on into the fall for services that have to be provided because of changes in services because of the virus. Pare added there was agreement on this disbursement with the understanding that it could also change.

O’Brien, Sr. read in the BOE Minutes they will be losing $45,000 in ECS money this year. Carroll stated the ECS grant is going to be reduced by that amount. Approximately $12,000 was because a student left the district. The remaining is the adjustment done state-wide to balance the pool of money between all districts. There will be an adjustment next year as well.

O’Brien, Sr. saw in meeting minutes the special education budget is projected to be over by $309,000 for period ending March 31, 2020. Carroll stated not included in that is the excess cost grant that was received at the end of February for $345,000. The journal entry has not been made as yet because of virus crisis activities. Elsesser confirmed with Carroll that the deficit shown on the report O’Brien, Sr. is referencing should actually be positive with the credit received yet. The next report will reflect the credit.

Blanchard has some questions on the budget in general, the BOE’s portion, or the Capital portion. We will be looking for any possible savings. The BOE will not be applying for the van grant. The $12,000 was returned to the Town Council. Are the categories of school computers and classroom furniture being considered to be reduced? Petrone replied the computers have already been reduced considerably with significant changes to plans. This number was cut by at least $250,000 per Elsesser. This is for the system refreshes with main core switches and related hardware. Petrone stated that is a much lower number needed for this work so we will be in a challenging position on the network refresh. Carroll added the budget for last year was $150,000 with $120,000 devoted to the disaster recovery plan. If this year’s number is impacted it will be a two years with limited expenditures.
Petrone answered Thomas’ question about how the loaned-out devices will be returned stating BOE is concerned about the condition the devices will be in upon return. The school computers category does not carry these devices. That will be on the operating budget.

O’Brien, Sr. researched a previous comment that the fund split for the preschool was 40/60. Coventry had 20 students of the 97. Has the number of students that we are responsible for increased? Petrone reminded the group that legally we must provide special education services for three- and four-year olds alongside their peers. The guideline is there should be no more that 50% per classroom. The split was arrived at based on the math. The BOE has done what the Town Council asked in not having taxpayers shoulder costs for the preschool. Backhaus commented the preschool fund increased $110,000 last year. If schools do not come back into session this year, approximately $120,000 will be lost in tuition.

Petrone has not heard from anyone in the State about the possibility of receiving any stimulus funds. Information found online looks like no funds will be received; the lion’s share is going to urban districts.

How has the tuition program worked out for the preschool? Coventry has developed special programs that people are now looking at the program in this educational setting. If we can service those kids without impacting our program, we want to do that. We have been able to take in tuition students. Are there funds available that can be used to help with capital items? The BOE had some discussions in the fall to purchase some items that were not included in the operating budget. The BOE would have to revisit these discussions. Beausoleil stated we are a special education service provider through this account and some districts will be negotiating with us for what they are willing to pay so it may not be as profitable as originally projected. O’Brien, Sr. would ask the BOE consider any opportunity to use any of those funds to offset next year’s budget because of the current circumstances. Williams asked if the projected balance of that fund is known? O’Brien, Sr. replied that it is currently $97,000. Petrone indicated he thinks the fund at the end of the year will be around the $110,000 mark. Carroll feels the range will be $110,000 - $120,000. Williams asked if we would be entitled to funds from other districts to offset those expenses that are incurred? Carroll and Petrone replied in the positive. Beausoleil added these tuition students fill empty spaces for which a teacher was already in place. Other districts may not feel responsible for a portion of the teacher’s salary.

O’Brien, Sr. expressed appreciation for what Petrone, Carroll, the BOE, and the entire staff in the school system for what they are doing. We are asking the BOE help because of the difficult time we are in and because of the pressures our taxpayers are going through. Petrone knows the BOE supports the Town Council and understands the process the Council is working through. Petrone stated the BOE is taking a hard look on trying to make cuts on the proposed budget and thanked O’Brien, Sr. for acknowledging the BOE budget was conservative to begin with. O’Brien, Sr. stated the Council is going to do the same and departments are looking were cuts could be made. Council is also looking at capital and debt also.

Pare added the BOE will go back to look at the budget while balancing the educational needs of children and taking care of the staff and the buildings.

3. **Acceptance Of Minutes, March 9, 2020:**
Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the March 9, 2020 meeting.

By: Williams  Seconded: Thomas

With the following correction:
• Page 1, item 3.D., second sentence – change “out” to “our”.

Voting:
For: O’Brien, Sr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

4. Reports:
4.A. Committee Chair: Matthew O’Brien, Sr.
O’Brien, Sr. did not have a report other than to thank Elsesser and Backhaus and all of the staff for the work they are doing under very difficult circumstances.

4.B. Committee Members:
Nothing to report from the Members.

4.C. Finance Director: Amanda Backhaus
From her memo dated April 13, 2020, Backhaus reported tax revenues are down. General fund revenues as a whole are in line with last year. The largest outstanding revenue of almost $5 mil is the ECS grant and a couple hundred thousand in taxes. We anticipate the ECS money will be paid in April. An analysis of Parks & Rec shows a loss of $20k if they are told no more programs for this year. We hope they can hold summer camp as this is their largest revenue source. O’Brien, Sr. asked if we are providing services because of COVID-19 that we don’t normally provide? Elsesser stated yes. There is a big draw down on food needs and other special services from Human Services; we will have to follow and track thousands of grants from FEMA and other sources to possibly get reimbursed. Likely receipt would not be before June 30, 2020.

4.D. Review/Discussion: Monthly Finance Reports
Williams asked about a previous discussion to add a line showing the expenditures per month for each line item. Is that still a work in progress? Backhaus replied a summary was added under the expenditures tab but did not produce broken out data. She will try to refine this for next month.

4.E. Board Of Education Fiscal Reports: February 2020
Backhaus recalls the NCEP revision went up a couple hundred dollars per pupil.

4.F. Board Of Education Fiscal Reports: March 2020

5. Discussion: FY19 BOE Encumbrance Analysis:
Backhaus reported the balance of the BOE Encumbrance account is ~$45,088. After an outstanding purchase order is paid there will be a remaining balance of $19,488 that is anticipated to go back to the general fund at the end of the year. Backhaus reported it is up to the BOE as to how the fund is used once the Council approves the budget line.
6. **Discussion: Municipal Tax Relief Deferral Program**

Members thanked Backhaus for providing the background information regarding the programs. O’Brien, Sr. agrees with Backhaus’ recommendation of the 3% interest for 90 days is the better of the options for our circumstances. The monthly interest is .25% per month. Thomas agree with Backhaus’ recommendation. Elsesser indicated the Lake Associations may be affected by this. Whatever the Town does, the Associations have to do the same as long as they are not crossing borders.

**Motion:** I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Coventry Town Council that the Town of Coventry participate in the low interest program as outlined in the Governor’s Executive Order 7s, section 6.

By: Thomas  
Seconded: Williams

Voting:  
For: O’Brien, Sr., Thomas, Williams  
Against: None  
Abstain: None

1. **Discussion: Fiber Conduit To DPW Facility**

Elsesser reported WanRack dark fiber is a better option than Charter low speed cable. VoIP cannot be installed at DPW nor can large engineering files be sent between DPW and Town Hall now. The best option is to negotiate and enter into a contract agreement with WanRack. We would do a capitalization down payment and then monthly expense for five years. It would be a utility expense at DPW but we need it to operate. The run would be from DPW to the high school, through the high school, and back into the Town Hall system. The monthly cost will be $490 if we put $13,500 down. The fiber will be lit up next year in the August time-frame. The down payment will be made out of this year’s budget. Williams stated this seems like a lot of money. Backhaus reported the operating functionality of DPW is minimal right now. The unreliable internet is prohibiting the staff of DPW from getting their work done. Satellite antennas are pointed to the internet. There is no Charter at the facility; it is out on Main Street. Charter wanted $10,000 to run the line in from Main Street and then a monthly payment of $200 for 100gb speed. And Charter would have control of it. DPW needs faster speeds than that. The Town Engineer is at the facility. Williams would like this topic to be discussed at the next Council meeting. Elsesser has not signed the contract yet for WanRack. However, the paperwork is being worked on. He believes he can wait a week without impeding progress.

2. **Discussion: FY21 Use Of Fund Balance**

O’Brien, Sr. does not feel there is enough information available for what he would like to be considered. There are a number of factors that we don’t have information on yet. Thomas was reminded that the eventual goal is 15%. The Town has done a good job of having the balance increase over the past years. O’Brien, Sr. stated these circumstances we are in is a good reason to consider using some of the fund balance to offset any tax increase in the budget. Use of funds could go toward one-time expenditures. There are some options. Elsesser does agree if this fund is thought of as emergency funding, we are in an emergency.
Whatever is done here builds a hole for next year’s budget so a multi-year approach may be needed. Elsesser and Backhaus are working to get the budget down to zero change. He is more reluctant to go negative. We have a month or so to keep working on this. Backhaus has found a few savings by pulling some purchases into this year’s budget.

3. Discussion/Possible Action: FY20 Budget Transfers
Backhaus has six proposed transfers that are detailed in YEAR END TRANSFERS - FISCAL YEAR 2020 Proposed 4/13/20.

Motion: I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Coventry Town Council to approve the transfer requests listed in the agenda.

By: Thomas Seconded: Williams

Voting:
For: O’Brien, Sr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

Backhaus has another project that she would have to do a transfer for. This would be for a remote dispatch center for the Police Department. That would involve an upgrade to the Citrix server and new computers in the cars. Two of the three quotes received are generally around $30,000 - $35,000 but we are trying to get it as a FEMA reimbursable project since we are doing this for this emergency period. She may add this transfer request to the Council agenda for next week. O’Brien, Sr. would be interested in seeing the quotes. Elsesser reported the Chief spoke to Plainville about being the fall back dispatch center should Coventry lose all of the dispatchers to coronavirus. However, we are running different versions of the servers so an upgrade is required. When the servers are upgrading the computers have to be upgraded. This would allow us have a fiber connection via the PSTN free of charge if we get overwhelmed so Plainfield becomes our dispatch center. This arose because New Haven had to shut down their center for a day to do a deep cleaning. The State Police dispatch centers had to do the same. We can’t shut down for a day or really for an hour so we need to have a back up plan. Backhaus added this has been a project in the CIP for the past few years. If we do this now, under these circumstances, it will be reimbursable by FEMA leaving Coventry with only 25% of the cost. If new computers are purchased for this those would be able to be transferred to the two new police cruisers that are in the budget. Elsesser stated this has gone up the FEMA chain; it was stated this seems reasonable which is about the best we can get but it is not a guarantee. But they did not say no. O’Brien, Sr. asked Backhaus to bring this forward.

4. COVRRA
1. MIRA: Final Distribution of Mid-Connecticut Project Funds
2. Trash collection and disposal contract

Elsesser stated it is time to make a decision on the contract. A decision is not yet needed on the rate. We could pay from $120 - $160 per ton with MIRA. Elsesser would like to stay out of MIRA. When CRRA is closed Coventry will receive $19,757 for the final close out. The Willimantic Waste and Paper contract would be $71.30 MSW per ton. Recyclables would be $30.90. This is the best we can get from Willimantic Waste and
the best Elsesser believes we can get in the state. Elsesser recommends the contracts for Willimantic Waste and USA Hauling be approved.

**Motion:** I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Coventry Town Council to approve the contracts for Willimantic Waste and USA Hauling.

By: Williams  
Seconded: Thomas

**Voting:**  
For: O’Brien, Sr., Thomas, Williams  
Against: None  
Abstain: None

5. **Consideration/Discussion Of Next Steps: Library Renovation & Improvement**  

**Committee Presentation**  
The presentation was received from the Committee. The Council approved the goal stating we would be willing to consider to match the grant up to $850,000. O’Brien, Sr. sticks by this goal.

**Motion:** I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Coventry Town Council the Library Renovation Committee be given that target as a goal to bring the project within the cost of the $850,000 grant and up to $850,000 matching funds and give additional direction to the Committee.

By: Williams  
Seconded:

**Discussion:** O’Brien, Sr. stated this may necessitate the Committee getting an extension. It may also require the Council to put in some more money to cover the expenses while the plan is being developed. O’Brien, Sr. feels the plan was well done for what they were given. He does not feel it would pass a referendum at that level and is happy for the project to go forward and have the Committee bring the plan to a lower cost basis. O’Brien, Sr. indicated it is because of the grant that he is willing to do this. If there was no grant outstanding this would not be the time to push this forward. This is an opportunity the Town needs to explore and take advantage of if possible. Thomas asked if Deb Walsh could speak to the Library’s needs if we recharge them? A new charge does not need to be written per O’Brien, Sr. Walsh stated the Committee responded to the charge that was given to them 1.5 years ago. They specifically did exactly what the charge told them to do. The Committee is waiting for further direction from the Town Council. Walsh is sure the members realize there is a major change that has happened in all towns and the state. They are totally willing to listen to a request from the Town Council to make changes if needed. The $2.4mil proposal presented to the Council met what was asked of them. She feels this was done in the most efficient and conscientious way of dealing with the library. To reduce it from 2.4 to 1.7ish is a major change. Walsh personally wishes this did not have to be done. The Committee will look at the recommendation and do their darnedest to meet the obligation. Walsh added the Committee would appreciate being able to move on this quickly because the grant does end in November. She does not know if that can be extended again or if there would be value in asking for one. The grant fund does not give more than $250,000 for minor renovations. The question is what we can do with the reduction and if the Council will be happy with the end result. Elsesser stated we will have to resubmit the
plans to them because we had given them this prototype to get the money. When presented with the revised plan, hopefully they will keep the $850k. Walsh added one of the problems with the whole water intrusion issue cannot be looked at on its own; it is tied into the whole project. Cutting it is not going to be an easy thing to do. O’Brien, Sr. stated there is a different reality. The Committee is made up of talented and dedicated people who can come back with a project that still satisfies the needs of the library at a price that we hope will be supported by the taxpayers. Walsh stated the Committee will need a specific directive from the Council to do something slightly different. Thomas asked Walsh if rethinking the project will require new plans be drawn up? Walsh replied she thinks there will be additional costs for engineering studies or architectural work. Thomas stated this will need to be talked about at the Council meeting. Thomas thought this information may help for the discussion at the Council meeting.

Motion: I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Coventry Town Council that we modify the Library Renovation project to meet the Council’s goal of matching the grant of $850,000 with up to an additional $850,000 based on the project.

By: Williams Seconded: O’Brien, Sr.

Discussion: Thomas stated this is a Council goal she did not support because she supports the full library project that was presented. The reason she would support the $850,000 match discussed at this meeting is because of the economic circumstance we are under now. She wants to distinguish making this motion based on a Council goal versus making this motion based on the changed economic situation.

Amended motion accepted by Williams: I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Coventry Town Council to direct the Committee to bring the project in for a total cost not to exceed $1.7mil with the understanding that the Town Council would be open to matching up to $850,000 for the grant.

By: Williams Seconded: O’Brien, Sr.

Voting:
For: O’Brien, Sr., Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None

6. Discussion/Continuation Of The Budget Deliberations And Updates
Elsesser reported that he and Backhaus continue to work on this. This will be an ongoing process. At the next Council meeting we should set some dates to do some soul searching and have some meetings.

O’Brien, Sr. would like to ask, for informational purposes, Bob Kortmann if we would be safe and okay should we do this year’s lake treatment on or after July 1. This has not been done in the past although it has been proposed. A discussion would be needed. These are his thoughts only but would like to get the question answered.

7. Adjournment
Motion: I move that the Finance Committee adjourn.

By: Thomas  Seconded: Williams

Voting:
For: O’Brien, Sr., 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.