

Minutes
Local Emergency Coordination Committee
May 5, 2021
(Virtual meeting due to COVID-19 safety guidelines)

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:05 PM.
Present: John Elsesser, Laura Stone, Beth Mancini, Mark Palmer, Bud Meyers, Jim McLoughlin, Ted Opdenbrouw, Bud Meyers, Julie Blanchard, Bill Watkins
Also present: Al Landry, Event Organizer, Food Truck Festival; Matt Anderson, RiMaConn Relay event; Joe Ferenc, Ride for Gage event
Absent: Matthew O'Brien, Jr.
2. **Audience of Citizens:** none.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:**
Mark Palmer moved to accept the minutes of the March 4, 2021 meeting. The motion was seconded by Bud Meyers and carried on unanimous vote.
4. **Coming Events:**
 - **Debrief: Make-a-Wish Road Race.** Concerns were expressed about the implementation of this event. Mark Palmer said that the organizer and indicated there would be plenty of volunteers to assist with logistics, runner control, and traffic control. This did not happen. John Elsesser noted that the Fire Police stepped up to help. Jim McLoughlin said that the Fire Police gave the same feedback regarding the lack of event personnel.
 - **Food Truck Festival – May 8, 2021.** Al Landry of Coventry Cares was present to discuss their event. Three trucks will participate and CC has people to work the area. Hopefully there will be enough attendance to make the event worthwhile. We hope to use the proceeds to support the Coventry Food Bank, Fuel Bank and scholarships. We are offering desserts rather than food. The event will take place from 11 AM – 4 PM, with set-up at 10 AM and break-down John Elsesser said we have no issues with the plan as long as the Board of Education is on board, and trash is cleaned up.
 - **Memorial Day Parade – May 31, 2021.** John Elsesser said he has talked with Manny Rodrigues of the American Legion. They are planning a scaled-back event this year. Right now they are planning to have adult marchers only due to COVID, but since we spoke restrictions have eased, so things may change. We still have some concerns about kids marching and will discuss it again. Mark Palmer said he met with Manny on Monday. There will be no Scouts or Little League participation. They are considering starting at Memorial Green instead of GH Robertson School, with plans to cordon off areas for groups to stand. They would line the vehicles up on Cross Street. This is still up in the air. John said that the military fly-over has been arranged. We will do some social media promotion. The Fire Department will participate with one person per truck.
 - **Steeplechase Bike Tour – August 21, 2021.** No representative from the event was present. John Elsesser said they have done this event for multiple years. There is no conflict with our road construction schedule this year. The same permit is not needed – they don't assemble in town. Mark Palmer said they need Local Traffic Authority approval. By the time they get to Coventry they are really spread out. We haven't had any issues in the past.
 - **RiMaConn Relay – August 28, 2021.** Matt Anderson, event organizer, was present to discuss plans for the event, which will be the second run. The first event took place in

2019. It is a 95 mile relay race from Providence to Hartford, with 85% of it taking place along bikeways. The Coventry section will come across the Willimantic River from Columbia across the bridge to King Street. There will be minimal impact with no exchange zones in town. There are 130 teams with one person participating at a time. There will not be much impact on the trail. John Elsesser asked if they have experienced any conflict with bikers or horses. Matt replied no, other than at the start, the group spaces out pretty quickly. John Elsesser said that Public Works drive through a day or two ahead of time to make sure no frees are down. Bill Watkins replied they will do that. John said the trail is in reasonable shape, and stays in pretty good shape. The State will be replacing the bridge in a couple of years. Matt replied that will further minimize any potential impact in town. John noted that Hope River Road Bridge will also be getting replaced, but they will still be able to get through. Matt said the CT DEEP is aware of the event, and the date is on their calendar.

- **Ride for Gage – Sept. 11, 2021.** Joe Ferenc was present to discuss plans for the event. This is the 5th annual charity ride for teen suicide prevention and raises approximately \$18,000 with 100 motorcyclists participating. Riders are escorted by State Police and the rides have been without incident. We would like to come through Coventry via Rt. 31/Rt. 44. It takes approximately 7-8 minutes and they will be on Rt. 44 for half of that time. The riders are experienced. We would like an email stating that we have permission. The other towns along the route are all set. Mark Palmer indicated he met with Joe to discuss the event. This is the first year they would come through Coventry. They had asked a few years ago, but were requested not to. With the escorts it should be fine. We can't guarantee police officers to help, but he has no concerns. John Elsesser noted that CT DOT is replacing the culvert at Rt. 44 near the Highland Park Market Plaza, so there may be some gravel in the area. He suggested checking the route prior to the event to give the riders a heads-up if necessary. Joe said he will do that. John said there may also be some construction at the intersection of Swamp Road and Rt. 44 but he doesn't imagine there will be any impacts for the riders. The Local Traffic Authority will supply the necessary approval.
- **Veterans Day Patriot Road Race – Nov. 6, 2021.** Peter DePaola was present to discuss plans for the event, which is coming up on its 6th year. We try to be attentive to both crowds and traffic. He thinks we work well with EMS and Police. There are always one or two people who try to run in the middle of the road, but otherwise we try to keep it tight. The route will be the same as in previous years. John Elsesser noted we will have a new Recreation Director by then, so we will need to reach out. Jim said that Peter and Ray have already met to discuss Fire Police services. Ray will keep us informed. Peter said we appreciate the support.

5. COVID-19 Update – Jim McLoughlin/John Elsesser:

John Elsesser said the rules are changing dramatically in a few weeks. Town Hall will go more slowly to make sure everyone is comfortable. We don't want long lines of people coming in to make tax payments. We are looking at rules for summer camp. There were 18 cases in Coventry last week – we are the second highest in the region and above the State average. Vaccination rates are good. We are making progress but don't want to get ahead of ourselves.

Jim McLoughlin said that the testing facility is still in operation so there are plenty of options. If contacted for health tracing, please cooperate.

Agency updates:

Police Department – Mark Palmer:

- Staffing is back up – two officers had been out for a lengthy period.
- Loren Santiago is doing well in the Academy. He passed his firearms training. He is coming back to Coventry for two weeks of field training. He is scheduled to graduate July 7.
- We have eight candidates for the new officer hire. Interviews will be conducted before the end of May. We hope to have the process finalized by July. A lateral hire goes through the same hiring process except for physical agility testing.

Public Works – Bill Watkins:

- Next week’s construction schedule will include paving at North Farms, Ridgebrook, High Meadow and Barbara. We hope not to close the roads. Next up will be Carpenter, Trowbridge, and South.
- Mark Palmer noted that there is a large pothole on Rt. 44 headed west before Silver Street. Traffic is diverting around it. Can we call someone? Bill will contact State DOT.

Coventry Public Schools – Ted Opdenbrouw:

- The grant committee is working the submission of the school safety grant for the end of June. It is a lot of work but we are on track. We are looking to get some new safety upgrades and additional cameras, and to complete some projects we were unable to finish.
- The Senior Prom is 5/22 from 6-10 PM at the high school. There will be a tent on the football field. Masks and social distancing will be observed. There is no junior prom this year due to COVID. Bud Meyers noted to make sure that the tent is inspected by Building/Fire officials. Ted will pass that information along to Principal Blake.
- Graduation is 6/12 at 10 AM on the field. Each graduate can have four guests. Masks and social distancing will be observed.
- New legislation is requiring that schools K-10 offer basic fire arms safety programming. Officer Grimaldi is assisting with age appropriate activities. The basic lesson across the board includes instruction that if you see a gun, stop, don’t touch it, and tell an adult. These basics meet standard curriculum.
- The last day of school is Tuesday 6/8.

Fire/EMS/Emergency Management – Jim McLoughlin:

- We are reviewing contacts with the fire associations. Two sets of legal review will be done.
- We drafted a road closure policy which is under review.
- We held an interview with the candidate interested in the permanent fire chief position for Department 18. It went well and will set the protocol for future positions.
- The rescue truck is getting graphics and will soon be back in service. We will do a press release.
- The old forestry truck is up for auction on the GovDeals site. The opening bid was \$500 and the current bid is \$4,000.
- The fire department was treated to a pizza dinner last night by a family who had a member transported by EMS. They wanted to express their appreciation. Other cash donations are also evidence of our positive impact in the community.

Fire Chief – Bud Meyers:

- During the month of March we responded to 100 calls, consisting of: 32 BLS, 37 ALS and 1 cardiac arrest for a total of 70 medical calls, 1 mutual aid structure fire, 1 chimney fire, 1 electrical fire, 8 brush fires, 3 MVA’s, 5 false alarms, and 21 good intent.

- In the month of April we responded to 108 calls, consisting of: 40 BLS, 33 ALS and 1 cardia arrest for a total of 74 medical calls, 1 structure fire, 2 mutual aid structure fires, 1 electrical fire, 7 brush fires, 2 MVA's, 5 false alarms, 16 good intent.
- We sent out an RFP for our large fire apparatus looking for maintenance services, and two vendors submitted. We moved forward with Bulldog Fire & Emergency Apparatus, Inc.
- The Fire Administrator attended an OSHA and the Fire Service training to learn how to make the department OSHA compliant. OSHA requires at least quarterly training to assist us with 10 key subjects: PPE, fire behavior, SCBA fire stream, hose advancement, pumping fire apparatus, ladders, rescue, forcible entry, and ventilation.
- We purchased a subscription to the Eastern CT Fire School to get training in search operations, ventilation, and hose advancement into buildings. We have already put the training grounds to use for ground/aerial ladders, and ventilation techniques. Our next trip is May 26 to perform self-rescues with ladder and rope bailout training.

Town Manager – John Elsesser:

- Work will begin at the intersection of Swamp Road/Rt. 44. We are at the 90% design stage on South Street near the Homestead. Both of these projects will start in the fall and end next spring.
- UConn is transitioning from a varsity to a club sport for rowing.
- We got a small Boston Whaler for \$50. We will place it at the dock for rapid response. We are hoping to get one more section of dock so that the police boat can be in deeper water.
- We are approaching the end of the fiscal year. Please coordinate your purchase orders with Amanda.
- The budget passed so we can start looking at larger capital items with long lead times. The supply chain is broken. There is a shortage for car parts. Some '22 models may not ever be made. Nothing can be ordered prior to 7/1.
- People have wondered why we use GovDeals for our auctions. There have been 433 visitors to our auction for the brush truck – that's more than we can do on our own. We will publicize the link to the auction.
- We are getting ready for a busy summer.

Town Council – Julie Blanchard:

- Julie asked if the tree prep at the Farmers' Market is good to go. John replied yes. The Market opens 6/6. The Health District is interested in a pop-up vaccination clinic there, but maybe not on opening day. We are in the process of planning an opening day ceremony. This season will be run much closer to the way it used to be, with in-field vendors, entertainment, etc. Fire Police will be helping again – their involvement has worked well.

6. Fire Transition Study Committee:

- The team called for letters of intent from those interested in the permanent positions. The Fire Chief interview was conducted, and a recommendation is pending to the Town Council. Once that appointment is ratified, the other applications will be turned over to the Chief to fill those positions. Once those are done we would like to conduct a ceremony.

- The committee plans to meet, review our charge, and request to disband. We will have fulfilled our charge at that point.

7. Other Business:

Julie Blanchard asked members to consider whether they can help the Town Council or Town Manager with the racism issue. We have a citizen who wants us to declare racism to be a public health crisis. The Human Services Department is also working on it. If you can share examples on what you are doing to prevent these issues it would be appreciated.

Mark Palmer said he prepares an annual report that outlines any profiling complaints and use of force. There was an incident about 18 months ago where someone called a child a racist name. Incidences of racist graffiti are down. These reports are included in the annual report. We also do an annual review that looks at statistics for traffic stops to evaluate any racial profiling issues. Each year there have been no issues. We are one of only four departments in the State to submit our data – a report is being released in the near future. Because we are a small department, the report will look a little different. It is a voluntary process. There are isolated incidents, but from what we have seen it is not widespread. There have been incidents at Patriots Park. If we get reports of suspicious individuals, our staff is aware that a person is not deemed suspicious based on their race. We don't respond to calls like that unless the person is trespassing. John Elsesser said that Eric Trott is getting a lot of calls regarding the fishing access issue at Woodbridge. We have tried to get CT DEEP to enforce their ownership issues of the easement. There is nothing further we can do. People need to contact DEEP. Mark Palmer said that investigators requested copies of our report – we gave it to them and they have no issues.

Mark said we have been participating with the schools looking for people who are interested in community conversations on this topic. If you are interested, reach out to Annemarie Sundgren. John said we are having some issues about who is going to coordinate this over the summer. We have a staff capacity issue. The School Superintendent's office says they can't do it this summer. Project Open Choice is supposed to start in the fall – Coventry has five applicants for 5-7 openings. The students start in kindergarten and move up, with the goal of attending from K-12. Community conversations are not required to start, but it is important. We are looking for these new families to be engaged in the community.

8. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 PM on a motion by Bud Meyers, seconded by Mark Palmer and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone