MINUTES
COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL
May 18, 2020
TOWN HALL ANNEX & VIRTUAL
7:30 P.M.

1. Call To Order, Roll Call:
The meeting was called to order by Blanchard at 7:35 p.m.

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

Members absent:

Also present:
John Elsesser – Town Manager
Amanda Backhaus – Finance Director

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

3. Audience Of Citizens:
(30 minutes – 5 minutes maximum per citizen)
Submit comments to be read aloud to: audience@coventry.org

The following citizens submitted comments which were read aloud. All comments are available via this link: https://www.coventryct.org/DocumentCenter/View/4052/Audience-of-Citizens-Written-Statements-5-18-20

Matthew Kyer, 4 Wall Street
Amy Campbell-Dexter, 57 Joshua Lane
Chris Morgan, 62 North Ayers Road
Chris Morgan, 62 North Ayers Road
Mary Ann Hansen, 74 Avery Shores
Steven Hall, 40 Old Tolland Turnpike
Elizabeth Woolf, 10 Flanders Woods Lane
Jennifer Petro, 17 Deborah Drive
Philip Mann, 258 Carpenter Road
Lisa Dunn
Michael Petro, 17 Deborah Drive
Ryan Darcy, 1320 Cedar Swamp Road
Elizabeth Bauch, 110 Seagraves Road
Nichole Bingaman, 343 Hannah Lane
Sandye Simon, 425 Geraldine Drive
Marty Milkovic, 856 Dunn Road
Pat Schneider, 8 Flanders Woods Lane
Libby Parda, 68 Monument Hill
The Board of Trustees of the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library
Lindsay Darcy, 1320 Cedar Swamp Road
Robyn Gallagher, 984 Main Street
Robyn Gallagher, 984 Main Street
Carly Imhoff, 146 Beebe Farms Road
Jaime Thompson
Sean Gallagher, 984 Main Street
Kathleen Willett, 22 Windswept Way
Victoria Phillips, 16 Cindy Drive
Joan Lewis, 48 Antrim Road
Michelle Talaga, 181 Cedar Swamp Road
Kate Uriano, 36 Windswept Way
Jillian Wood Reviczky, 110 Wall Street
Susan Frarie, 24 Round Hill Road
Julia McAuleer, 295 Pucker Street
David and Kristy Pezzino, 49 Zeya Drive
Kathleen Breitenwischer, 61 Barbara Drive
Jessica Hall, 745 Merrow Road
Rebecca Vicki, 152 Antrim Road
Jillian Miner, 13 Hetzel Lane
Allison Conklin, 361 Broad Way
Greg Arabolos, 132 North Farms Road
Allyson Forstrom, 369 Riley Mountain Road
Stacie Simko, 124 Wolf Hill Road
Angela Rejman, 122 Judd Road
Tammy and Jay Anderson, 80 Lancaster Road
Christa Kiedaisch, 88 Standish Road
Jennifer Miller
Emma Eaton, 41 Sean Circle
Janine Elliott, 164 Root Road
Brandon Elliott, 164 Root Road
Kelly Sobol, 343 Riley Mountain Road
Tom & Jan Weston, 158 Beebe Farms Road
Carolyn Arabolos, 132 North Farms Road
Elizabeth Michel, 39 Ash Brook Drive
Jesse-Douglas Mathewson & Jennifer Doak-Mathewson, 234 Old Eagleville Road
Theresa Okun
Stephanie Dakin, 113 Armstrong Road
Kayla Fontaine, 84 Hickory Drive
Nicole Dennler, 62 Willow Glen Drive
Amy Senna
Jennifer Rodgers, 274 Hannah Lane
Mike Sobol, 343 Riley Mountain Road
Cameron Crouth, 105 Deborah Drive
Erin Riley, 1102 Main Street
Christopher Delvecchio & Terilee Boulanger, 60 Alice Drive
Linda Blakesley, 27 Berry Avenue
Jason Blakesley, 27 Berry Avenue

Suggestions to be more efficient with this process were made including limiting the word count of a citizen’s comment or allowing a long version for the Council members to read outside of the meeting and a short version to be used for the Audience of Citizens portion of the meeting.

Hand and Conant appreciate the allowance of all of the statements to be read beyond the scheduled thirty minutes especially since we are not allowed to hold a town vote because of circumstances.

4. **Acceptance Of Minutes:**
   **May 4, 2020**
   The minutes were not included in the packet.

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.

   Discussion: Thomas would like item 6.F.6 Memo from the Secretary of State removed from the Consent Agenda.

   **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**
   Blanchard reported the Council ratified the appointment Bud Meyers as interim fire department Chief and he is starting to appoint others under him. These are interim positions for now, beginning July 1, 2020.

   **6.B. Council Members:**
   Conant is excited to announce the Farmer’s Market is opening on June 7, 2020 as a virtual market with online orders. On market day the vendors will load the purchases into the patron’s vehicle.
Thomas has had contact from three residents:

1. Amber Kult started a Facebook page of Adopt a Senior. The idea is to adopt every senior throughout the town. They are trying to figure out how to get a list of all seniors. The best contact would be with the high school.

2. A voter would like to know when we might be able to move the meetings to a larger venue, such as the high school auditorium, where we can be socially distant. Elsesser stated the Governor's order is still limited to a group of five people. When that is changed we can look at a larger venue.

3. Someone asks her for clarification on how we are voting on the budget. Thomas does not know if it is clear to people there are a number of executive orders that prohibit in-person voting. The Town Manager asked the Town Attorney to clarify the orders and the interpretation was that we cannot do drive-by voting as did a near-by town. Based on that action another executive order was issued mandating that towns where normally a town meeting and referendum are held, the governing body makes the vote and makes the decision. There were a number of requests from the audience of citizens portion asking for postponement of the referendum. Elsesser stated the Governor's three orders mandated that the Council adopt the budget within a certain timeframe and to set the mil rate. The Council was directed by the Governor to do both. Failing to do that, any tax bills going out could be deemed illegal. There is no option to postpone the referendum. The Council adopted the 30-day timeframe for the resolution and that time is running out. It will be a two-step process with the Council adopting a proposed budget this evening; there is already feedback from the Budget Comments page with each email being received by all Council members at the same time. June 1 or 2 is the target date to allow us to get tax bills out on time. The resolution was vetted by the Town Attorneys to make sure we are in compliance with the Governor's orders; the adopted resolution is available online. O'Brien, Sr. concurs with Elsesser's statements. He added the Council set the last possible date we could do this in hopes there were changes in the orders in regards to referendum. We thought about doing a drive-thru vote; when the Governor saw this happening in some towns he issued another executive order. The Council believes we should have a referendum, we want to have a referendum, we fought to have a referendum, but the Governor has stymied us. It is unfortunate this has happened. None of us are happy about this at all. Thomas feels there is concern of how to include everyone. Even a drive-by referendum or walk-up is not going to include everybody. You'd have to have provisions to send out mail-in ballots. As much as this is challenging for us and feels uncomfortable, it at least treats everybody the same. Elsesser stated Vernon had 125 voters; he does not think that is representative either.

Thomas appreciates the time to hear all of the audience comments aloud. Many needs were pointed out that we will need moving forward that Thomas had not thought of. It was an education for her and hopes it was for everyone on the Council. Thomas thanks everyone who took the time to write. People are very mobilized to take care of our community. Hand commented given the circumstances our hands are tied as just outlined. It is not a vote but the least we can do is solicit input from our residents. This may be amongst the largest outpouring of feelings that Hand has seen about where we should be headed.

Hand continued that as much as many are able to view this right now it is Hand's understanding that our YouTube is still broken and that is a big problem as it is limiting access to the public meetings. There are many who don't have Charter cable and that is
the only thing working now to watch it live. It is vitally important that a majority of people can listen to the meetings. Hand feels YouTube is the best method for that. Elsesser replied efforts are being made to correct this issue in-house. We are working with the BOE trying to get the equipment upgraded. Because of reductions by the State we are not able to afford a new streamer and coder which would be another $5k - $6k.

6.C. Finance Committee: Matthew O’Brien, Sr., Chairperson
O’Brien, Sr. reported that at the Committee meeting:
- Backhaus went through the financial reports giving a good idea of our current status.
- We went over some communication with the BOE concerning the budget.
- The house subject to the tax sale was redeemed.
- Backhaus put forward some year-end transfers that the Committee approved and recommended to the Council for approval.
- There was a small amount of budget deliberations and we were waiting for additional information from the BOE.
- There was discussion of the collection rate that will be used to set the mil rate and because of the dismal economic situation we agreed to and recommended to the Council a 98% collection rate; that has been approved.

Hand submitted a couple of PDFs that included Moody’s putting Connecticut in the top seven states in the nation for its fiscal picture for moving into the next year. While there are problems all over, we are in better shape than we are giving ourselves credit for compared to all other states. That is because of the $2.5b rainy-day fund.


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

6.E. COVRAA – John A. Elsesser:
Elsesser reported the Transfer Station is open on Saturdays. We will try to work out a long-term strategy for re-opening that is safe for the staff and the public.

6.F. Town Manager – John A. Elsesser
6.F.1. Projects Update
- The interrogatories were filed today with PURA for the master meter application for the micro-grid project. Coventry Housing Authority and Eversource had to answer questions. United Illuminating filed to be part of that. We are awaiting the next step in the process.
- Deuty Chiefs were named. We will hold off stating names until we have a ceremony event for a live swearing in.
- The CGS parking lot project started today.
- We’ve lined up two contractors to get the Northfields drainage done in time for the remainder of the project to be completed.
- South Street LOCTCIP application is due this week for the intersection with Swamp and the curbs. Four target areas are being looked at. On Swamp Road near the intersection of Love Lane there is a hump in the road and
South Street and South Street Extension. The engineering estimates where obtained today at $3.8 mill. The grant has a $3 mill. maximum so the Love Lane intersection was eliminated which has a lot of accidents. With some future grant we may look at that project. Because of the nature of the area that project is something we will never do on our own.

- South Street engineering has gotten two price proposals that are significantly different. He is going to recommend we go with the vendor with lower proposal; it is a vendor we have worked with before.

Blanchard mentioned that Elsesser's report talks about grave concerns with the tax office in getting it prepared for a safe opening. Elsesser stated there can be 20 – 30 people in line and we can’t have that. The building is not suitable. In the meantime, we have done updating with accepting credit cards. There is very little reason for people to come to the tax office with other options available. The software now allows people to print off receipts if they do an electronic form of payment. The hallways are not 6’ wide. In the tax office there has to be a change in attitude of paying taxes in person. The set-up is not good for social distancing. Two people can be served at once at the counter by making adjustments and purchasing new equipment.

Blanchard asked about the public hearing on June 15, 2020 that Elsesser mentioned in a memo. This will be an open Zoom meeting for anyone to be able to attend. There is not an urgency in hold this meeting; the Council could decide to delay that.

6.F.2. COVID-19 Update

Elsesser stated we are trying to prepare the opening plan of Town Hall department by department. This will be a working document.

From Parks & Rec - the beaches will have parking reduced by 50%. Social distancing guidelines used with GIS show how many people can be on the beaches at one time. Orange construction fencing will be purchased to wrap around the playscapes to keep people off of them. Porta Potties will be used at Patriots Park as these are easier to clean and sanitize. The earliest opening date for beaches is June 13, 2020. If people violate the social distancing rules, the beaches will be closed. We are using the CDC rules for businesses as the guidelines.

A proposed date for the opening of Town Hall is not known until the safety measures are in place; these are currently on order. Elsesser would like to open slowly and for some offices by appointments. The Town Hall has not received complaints about not getting things done. Staff has come up with solutions like meeting in the foyer. The only complaint received, but not in our control, is general fingerprinting; these have been banned by the Governor.

Public Works is working on their back-to-work plan. There may be some tasks that cannot be done safely.

Elsesser mentioned the Planning and Zoning Commission has a statutory deadline to get this done. It will be an open Zoom meeting. The document is on the web page. Written comments or comments during the meeting are welcome.

Elsesser stated this needs to be wrapped up this week. Tim Liptrap sent information to local business about this program. This is an unbelievably great opportunity for businesses to use the financial acumen of the students and social media for business planning strategies to be drawn up by the Nichols College students participating in the initiative.


Thomas commented with the upcoming primaries she is sure the registrars are starting to work on this. Can we invite one of our registrars to come to one of our meetings in June to give an update with their planning? What roles each of the four will be taking? How can we as a Council help them with any needs they might have? This is going require all hands-on deck and it is important that we be informed. O’Brien, Sr. thanked Thomas for bringing this up. The other part is the registrars are going to need a number of volunteers so if we can publicize that early and help them to attract the number of people needed to be successful it would be a good idea. O’Brien, Jr. agreed. Thomas knows that in particular moderators are needed in Coventry. The general trend for election moderators are retired people who are in the age group that is more vulnerable to illness. It may be hard to recruit younger people because they may be working, but we may need to make an effort. O’Brien, Sr. feels they may be other logistics in this sort of environment so they may need more than straight moderators.


6.F.8. *Staff Meeting Minutes, May 6, 2020

7. Unfinished Business:
7.A. 19/20-51: Consideration/Possible Action: FY20/2021 Budget
Blanchard commented that O’Brien, Sr. has been leading the Council on the budget. O’Brien, Sr. thanked the people who wrote in and gave their opinions; he feels that was helpful. We need to consider why we are deliberating about the budget due to the virus; people are suffering financially and mentally. Some may be uncertain when they can get back to work or if they can return to work. The Council unanimously choose to support our taxpayers and businesses by putting forward a no-tax increase budget. The Council has been working diligently with the BOE and Staff and have made a great deal of progress. The Council’s role is to look at the budget in its entirety and to look ahead to consider what might happen mid-year. The State has historically pushed expenses down to towns or reduced grants mid-year if there are financial troubles. There is much uncertainty and unknowns. We have talked about next year’s budget as the rainy-day fund may be depleted or gone and pressures on the
State will be growing. Additional stress on revenues is expected for next year. Some of the decisions being made by pushing items from capital to next year’s budget creates a hole. We plan on using some fund balance to offset some of the revenues from this year’s budget to help keep the tax burden low. That creates the need to generate more revenue or make more cuts. The BOE has been cooperative. Elsesser and Backhaus have been unbelievable. To the public O’Brien, Sr. said we started with a $42 mill. budget and are now at a $41,658,000 budget and there is another $110,000 that we are still considering how to deal with. We have been working in a bipartisan fashion with cooperation from the BOE and have made great progress. There are small decisions to be made. Regarding the library budget there was a $12,500 increase requested initially; when the revised budget came out a reduction of $2,500 was asked for by Staff to the library. The director of the library, Margaret Kahn, offered to reduce the budget to a no-increase budget. Those are the only changes proposed for the library budget.

Changes made to the budget to this point:

- Capital Expenditures started out as $1,172,500; that has been reduced to $664,000. That was arrived at in a number of ways; those changes are listed on the website. The Capital account is now down by 43.37%.
- Debt Service, which is the amount of money being paid on debt, was reduced by $35,000; that is a decrease of ~1.25%.
- Board of Education budget was at $28 mill. BOE offered to decrease their budget by $150,058 which is a .53% decrease
- General Government account was $10.4 mill. Reductions of $181,079 represent a 1.74% decrease.
- The BOE reductions are primarily from salary savings from a number of retirements and anticipation of hiring for those positions at lower salaries. There was another $33k in savings which was redirected that into the Special Education budget so that was actually increased.
- On the Town side we decided not to fill what will be an open police officer position although that was a difficult decision. We are postponing promoting a police officer to sergeant. We’ve asked the unions to accept a zero increase as well as the non-union managers in Town Hall.
- The BOE has offered to return to the Town what they consider savings related to the virus. They’ve identified $158k; negotiations continue with the transportation companies and the special education companies that we send tuition paying students out to. They expect the number ($158k) will increase from those discussions as well as other savings as they close out the school year. On the non-COVID savings side the BOE offered to pay for the fiber optics project at $83k. They had to move $60k for what became a shortfall in the food service department because they are not taking in the regular revenues; they are receiving federal money revenues for providing meals. They are proposing to take $100k in non-COVID savings and move that into their 1% account which can be used for capital items that are in the CIP or for emergency issues. That account will be brought to $250k when that transfer happens.

As a point of information, from the Cares Act the state of Connecticut received federal money of which $99 mill. will be distributed to the towns. Coventry anticipates receiving over $100k from those funds intended for programs to catch people up from
distance learning. For purposes of information, the BOE has a tuition account that is not included in the budget; this is money received from the district because they are educating out of district students in the Coventry school system. That fund has $110k -$120k available to be used in any way the BOE chooses.

After all of those changes and cooperation we have a little room to maneuver to get to a real no-tax increase budget. The last proposal is that we would use $250k out of fund balance to offset some of that. The collection rate of property taxes was lowered because of the economic conditions so it realistically has to be lower than in past years. That would add another $250k to be offset to get to the no-tax increase budget. We have $110k left to find. On Friday O'Brien, Sr. suggested the Council consider asking the BOE to increase their reduction from $150k to $220k with another $40k from fund balance – this was for a point of discussion for this evening because we did not have the full Council on Friday. This last point is the only item that has not been discussed and agreed to.

Hand thinks in light of hearing from the constituents this evening we should proceed carefully in regards to the last point mentioned. O'Brien, Sr. understands and appreciates all the uncertainties and fears that people have, especially in the schools, although Elsesser has also reported on changes that will be taking place in Town Hall. O'Brien, Sr. wants to assure all of our parents and children, from the Council, that if education changes dramatically going forward and more resources are needed to meet the changing requirements to educate our children the Council intends to step up. This is not being done in isolation, we are doing this together. O'Brien, Jr. expressed agreement. O'Brien, Sr. continued we have to support each other. Right now we are looking out for our taxpayers and businesses trying to come in with a no-tax increase budget. Going forward we want to continue the great strides our education system have been making. We understand the difficult decisions the BOE is making. We don't know what education in the classroom is going to look like, as letters have said. We don't know what transportation will look like. If needs change dramatically and there is need for those kind of resources we hope and understand that the BOE would come back to the Council and we would be supportive to try and help them. As long as we are transparent and have open communications O'Brien, Sr. thinks we can get through this all together. Hand added that approximately 60 of the 64 letters mentioned no more cuts to the BOE budget, no more cuts to the library.

Looking at our options O'Brien, Sr. doesn't think anyone is going to propose cutting the Town budget any farther. O'Brien, Sr. thinks they have stepped up to the plate by eliminating positions, by taking zero percentage in salary increases. In the letter from the BOE to the Council they let us know they are just now opening discussions with their bargaining units that have open contracts and with their non-union members; this leaves O'Brien, Sr. hopeful that they can find additional savings that would not cause any layoffs, that would not take away resources from the classrooms per se, but might reduce the expected salary increase from the bargaining unit very similar to what the Town worked on and was able achieve.

Conant clarified with O'Brien, Sr. that the current BOE reduction is $150,050. Hand wants to make mention again that what the BOE has given us is a promise to return 100% in COVID-19 savings and there are still some outstanding things were they expect more to come to the General Fund above what they have already found in said
savings. Some of the negotiations have not been completed. Hand does not know the scale of the expected return. O’Brien, Sr. said the understanding is they now anticipate a 25% reduction in what they would have been paying under normal circumstances. That is included in the original $68k the BOE proposed. That has given the Council confidence to offer $290k in General Fund to offset the impact of taxes. Hand stated this is one of the circumstances the General Fund is designed for. O’Brien, Sr. stated by using the General Fund we have taken some options away if there are mid-year cuts. Having more money in the fund balance with give us flexibility to handle that kind of circumstance. Hand understands we don’t want to go too low with the fund balance because having the balance helped with getting the bond rating. The reality is that all of the towns are going to be needing to dip into their fund balance. O’Brien, Sr. reminded everyone that the BOE operating budget reduction is .53% of the budget. If they do this it goes to ~.74%. The Town is at -1.4%. The Town has contributed more out of their $10 mill. budget than the BOE has been able to out of their $28 mill. budget so far. Hand has totaled up what the BOE gave back as ~$600k. Hand believes the letter from the BOE to the Council states in lieu of cuts to their 20/21 operating budget they agreed to turn over 100% of the COVID-19 savings.

Thomas would like to talk about the money we are requesting from FEMA and the application we are putting in and what that means for our discussions about the budget and the anticipated monies coming in for that. The most recent one submitted to the State was on April 21, 2020 per Backhaus. On the Town side overtime related to the virus response was listed as $60k was for additional Vintec time. Since then, the bill came in for April and money was made so that takes away from the reimbursable amount. FEMA reimbursable costs are then at $20k. Thomas added if on the BOE side we subtract the amount coming back from the school lunch programs that leaves ~$147k that may come in from FEMA. Backhaus stated if you take out the school lunch we will be getting $49k back. Conant asked Backhaus if this is reimbursement or is this going forward? This is currently for reimbursement. Backhaus stated we did apply for the AFG FEMA grant which is reimbursement and going forward so some of the costs listed could potentially be reimbursed at 95% from that grant. At this point, we are waiting to hear what costs are allowable under which grant. There is not much detail on what is allowable so we are throwing every cost we can at them and hoping to get back as much as we can. The total request was for under $113; over $113 requires a much longer application to be completed. Backhaus has not heard of any predicted date when reimbursements will be made.

O’Brien, Sr. commented this is a proposed budget and information can continue to be gathered over the next two weeks and make any small changes needed before the final budget is passed. Backhaus’ numbers have Coventry getting back $65,377. Conant asked if we are going to consider the other option of going through the State? Elsesser replied the State is debating. It is hard to make rational decisions in an ever-moving world.

Thomas added at the Friday meeting the goal was to cut another $109k and we’ve spoken tonight about $290k from our fund balance which leaves $69k. What does it mean if we don’t cut the $69k as to where we have to set the tax collection rate? Backhaus stated you would have to take it out of fund balance to make the budget balance to the mil rate and collection rate for no-tax increase. Thomas suggested we put the no-tax increase aside, what does the $69k do? O’Brien, Sr. stated that would
be .06 mils. Backhaus stated it goes from 31.17 to 31.24; it would not have a huge impact.

**Motion:** I move that the Town Council make the following appropriations for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021:

- General Government $10,249,009
- Board of Education $27,846,548
- Capital Expenditures $ 664,000
- Debt Service $ 2,828,468
- For a Total of: $41,588,025

I move that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to enter into agreement with the Commissioner of Transportation for Town Aid Funds available to the Town of Coventry under Chapter 240 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

I move that the Town Council, pursuant to Title 7, Chapter 116b of the Connecticut General Statutes, adopt the FY 20/21 Capital Improvement Plan, as amended by the Council, and further, that the Town Manager be authorized to make application for funding for eligible projects under the Local Capital Improvement Program (LOCIP).

I move that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager and the Town Treasurer to borrow money from time to time in anticipation of tax collections as needed to meet current expenses.

I move that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to make any adjustments needed to correct any mathematical errors in the budget.


**Discussion:** Hand would like to entertain not taking the $70k out of _____. It would have to be out of fund balance. O’Brien, Sr. said that would be necessary to get to a no-tax increase budget. Hand believes we agreed to work towards a no-tax increase budget. Hand feels we have done that in good faith with the Town side and the school side and being within $69k is close. O’Brien, Sr. stated that would bring monies from the fund balance to $360k. Or don’t work to the zero per Hand. That would be an increase of .06 mils. Backhaus added that would still be a reduction of .96 from last year’s mil rate. O’Brien, Sr. stated because of the revaluation everybody needs to do their own calculations because your property may have appreciated or depreciated. The new mil rate will have a different impact on yours than if it stayed the same. Backhaus stated we will have the tax calculator up by the end of the week. Hand added the valuation is distributing the burden among the properties in town.

Blanchard added that she agrees with working toward the zero no-tax increase with a lot of great work being done. Blanchard is not sure she wants to go back a step at this point. Hand thinks within $69k is pretty close and is certainly in the spirit of what we all agreed to. Williams said zero is zero and let’s make it zero. And let’s not squabble over the $69k. O’Brien, Jr. added that some of us feel it may not have gone far enough and zero is a compromise. Hand stated he thinks some of us feel the zero was very much a compromise. The residents understand the needs of education and all of
the town services. This is darn close on a budget of $41 mill. and to get within $69k is the right place. Williams agrees we got very close but whether taking it from fund balance or taking it from somewhere else, we are going to get to zero. That is a compromise by Williams. He feels it should be cut quite a bit. We’re all trying to work together and we’re all trying to compromise. We’re all compromising.

Hand asked O’Brien, Sr. how he feels about taking more than the $290k out of fund balance? O’Brien, Sr. did not want to be the one to make a proposal because he likes what he proposed. If Hand is willing to vote in favor of the budget O’Brien, Sr. would consider changing $20k each way. That would be 50 and we would absorb 60 on the other side. It would be $20k more for __________. Backhaus confirmed that would be $310k out of fund balance and 50k from the BOE. O’Brien, Sr. replied yes, if Hand votes for the budget; if Hand does not O’Brien, Sr. is going back to where he was. Hand is mulling this over.

Conant’s question is - is that $50k from the BOE with the additional COVID-19 savings; it is her understanding $158k is a bare minimum and they are expecting more. O’Brien, Sr. asked if Conant is suggesting in two weeks there may be more numbers and we could revisit it. Conant is really opposed to asking the BOE to take more money out of operating. We can also look at the revenue sides in terms of the grants that are coming in. Conant knows that Backhaus is saying everything is iffy but we are talking $69k. It sounds like what they’ve requested is pretty close. O’Brien, Sr. replied as proposed now the BOE is contributing $18k from their operating budget and theirs is 2.6 times the Town’s side. Conant feels comparing the percentages is a blunt instrument. They are much bigger than the Town’s side but they also have a lot more operating costs and it’s very different type of operation. Backhaus added our unions taking zero percentages would not agree with that statement.

Thomas stated what we would vote on tonight is a proposed budget that gets presented and then we revisit again on June 1st. If we were to move forward with $310k from fund balance and request another $50k from the BOE to come to us in whatever ways, whether it is additional COVID savings...O’Brien, Sr. stated no. The COVID savings enable us to do the $310k. O’Brien, Sr. is basing going to $310 on additional COVID savings coming from the BOE. Hand stated their promise of turning over 100% of savings from COVID-19 was in lieu of operating cuts. Similarly to what O’Brien, Sr. is saying - is a deal, that’s a deal. And he believes we were happy to take it. Williams stated they should turn over 100% of the savings. Hand replied they have agreed to. Williams agreed and stated they should, any savings, whether it’s COVID or from this current school year should be turned back to the Town; savings should be turned over to the Town as good stewards of the taxpayers money. O’Brien, Sr. asked Hand if he wants the motion amended or go forward with the vote? That would be the proposed budget that has a $220k reduction from the BOE. The amendment O’Brien, Sr. proposed would go to 50 and 60 instead of 70 and 40.

Thomas stated she agrees with everybody who spoke saying we’ve all been making compromises to try to get to where we need to be. Thomas feels if we move forward with increasing the fund balance to $310 and request $50k from the BOE with the understanding that this is...I know that I’m going to be out voted. I know I don’t want to take any more from the BOE but I also know that I want to be out voted on the least impact to the BOE. Thomas would rather be out voted on a $50k additional request
from the BOE than a $70k request from the BOE and she is moving forward with the understanding this is a proposed budget and that there might be additional ways for us to find those $50k in savings than the BOE to find them before we put the budget to bed on June 1st or June 2nd. O’Brien, Sr. added just to be clear he made an offer in order to draw more votes to approve the budget. If no one else is going to approve the budget O’Brien, Sr. is not going to change his proposal. Thomas would be out voted on the $70k reduction; she might do $50k reduction with the understanding this is a proposed budget and moving forward we have to vote again.

O’Brien, Sr. amends his motion to make the change for the BOE budget to be $27,866,548. O’Brien, Jr. accepts the amendment as the person who seconded the original motion.

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

Blanchard thanked O’Brien, Sr., Backhaus, and Elsesser for their work on the budget and the BOE for working with the Council. Let’s hope the next couple of weeks brings some pleasant surprises.

7.B. 19/20-58: Consideration/Possible Action: Call To Town Meeting For Purchase Of Portion Of Stewart Property On Knollwood Drive For Open Space And Future DPW Use

Motion: I move to table this item.

By: O’Brien, Sr. Seconded: Thomas

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

7.C. 19/20-68: Consideration/Possible Action: Appointment Of Long-Term Recovery Coordinator
Elsesser stated this should be tabled again as the State argues on having a system or each town having their own coordinator.

Motion: I move to table this item.

By: Hand Seconded: Thomas

Voting:
For: O’Brien, Sr., O’Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Conant, Thomas, Williams
Against: None
Abstain: None
7.D. 19/20-69: Consideration/Possible Action: Amendment To Charge, Veterans Memorial Commission And Call To Public Hearing

Elsesser reported this is ready to go to public hearing. The question is if the Council wants to wait to hold the hearing when the public can actually attend or do it virtually. Blanchard would like to give it a chance for when the public can attend. Hand seconds that emotion. Conant can’t wait until we can meet in person again. Will there still be an option for people to Zoom in if they did not want to physically attend the hearing? Elsesser replied it would have to be an open Zoom so anyone can come in. It does lose something. The question is how urgently the Council wishes to proceed with this. The Veteran’s Commission does not have a quorum right now. Would another month matter? Blanchard does not think so since most things are cancelled currently. Elsesser stated it wouldn’t hurt to table it for a while to see what happens.

Motion: I move to table this item.

By: Blanchard        Seconded: Conant

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

7.E. 19/20-71: Consideration Of Extension Of Vacation Leave Carryover Policy Due To COVID 19 And Other COVID Duty Provisions With UPSEU/COPS

Motion: I move to extend vacation leave carryover policy due to COVID-19 and other COVID duty provisions with UPSEU/COPS as per memorandm discussion in Executive Session.

By: Thomas        Seconded: Hand

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

8. New Business:

8.A. 19/20-72: Consideration/Acceptance: FY 19/20 Year-End Transfers

Backhaus stated these transfers include coverage of salary overages as well as additional funds for IT and for getting all of the safety equipment for COVID-19 to get up and running. We want to get some IT projects started this year instead of next. We are about $1k short on _____.

Motion: I move the Council approve the year-end transfers as presented.

By: Hand        Seconded: O’Brien, Jr.

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

8.B. 19/20-72: Consideration/Possible Action: Appropriation From CNREF For Engineering Services, South Street LOTCIP Project
Elsesser suggested this item be tabled.

Motion: I move the Council table this item.

By: Hand Seconded: O’Brien, Sr.

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

8.C. 19/20-74: Consideration/Possible Action: Town Council Senior Class Awards
Blanchard stated this is something we do annually. The high school picks out the award and the recipient and the Council provides the plaques that are typically presented in a ceremony. This year there will be an alternative method of presentation.

Motion: I move that we approve 19/20-74 Town Council Senior Class Awards and moved forward with money that is already in the budget.

By: Thomas Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Blanchard thanked Conant for staying in touch with the high school secretary and the guidance person.

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

Blanchard congratulated the Seniors who are graduating in this trying time.

9. Miscellaneous/Correspondence:
9.A. *Board Of Education: 4/30/2020 Agenda, 5/14/20 Agenda

10. Executive Session:
Union negotiations
Blanchard stated we’ve already had the executive session.

11. Adjournment:
Motion: I move that the Council adjourn at 10:58 p.m.
By: O’Brien, Sr.   Seconded: Hand

Voting:
For: Hand, Conant, 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.
Respected Town Council Members,

It has come to my attention that cuts to the proposed education budget are being considered.

As you well know, we are currently navigating our way through unprecedented times. Our financial needs in the short- and long-term are unknown. Although the board would, under normal circumstances, be considering how best to limit the financial impact on our local taxpayers, this is clearly not the time to draw a line in the fiscal sand. There are so many unknowns regarding the start of the new school year that we simply can’t anticipate what it will cost to educate the students in our community.

With all due respect to those who are experiencing a reduction in their incomes due to Covid-19, a slight reduction in our mill rate at the cost of providing our youth with the high quality education our town provides simply isn’t worth the perceived savings. As we approach a new school year that will, in all likelihood, include distance learning and staggered school days, please consider the impact on our students before you further cut the proposed education budget.

Matthew Kyer
4 Wall Street
Coventry
As a long time town resident and a senior citizen I respectfully ask that you keep cuts to the library budget to a minimum. My husband and I have never sent children to the Coventry school system but we have always been dedicated users of the library. In this time of increased homeschooling the library’s resources will play an even more crucial role in education. The library is a vital resource for people of all ages in Coventry.

Thank you,
Amy Campbell
57 Joshua Lane
Coventry, CT

Get Outlook for iOS
As the council continues to work toward finalizing the budget for the upcoming year I ask them to recognize that this needs to be the the most reduced budget that we have seen in years. The town, state, and country are facing what will likely be an unprecedented financial crisis unlike anything we have dealt with in our lifetimes. 15 to 20% of the state unemployed. Estimates that 30 to 40% of small businesses, the life blood of the American economy, shuttered and never to reopen. Even if our town is able to fair better than most we do not exist in a bubble. The world will certainly be a less stable and uncertain place for many in our community in the year to come not to mention more costly. Many of our friends, neighbors, and family are going to make extremely difficult decision around the kitchen table. People who worked their entire lives, and fought to be responsible so that they would never have to make these decisions have seen lives torn apart, and the "new normal" will be a difficult adaptation to say the least.

There are no easy solutions to what we face, but there is little question that if Government gets in the way it will only make these difficult times harder. Our town, predominantly made of working middle class families, median age in their 40's exists in that unique place in America; We are both the workers and the tide that lifts the ships yet are impacted hardest by the governments manipulations and unlikely to qualify for the help. But America is no doubt fueled by us, its middle class.

Money is most efficient in the hands of the earner whom it belongs to in the first place. There is no board, committee or council that knows better what impacts you than you. We should endeavor to keep as much as of it in the hands of the people as possible. I realize it feels difficult for government to give up that control and the spending we have unfortunately allowed it to become accustomed to, but be assured it pales to what people will silently endure at home.

During the budget meeting held on the 15th many good suggestions on how to make some significant reductions were made. These are a good place to start, but I encourage the Town Council not only to refrain from hastily moving forward on the issue but to also reduce further the spending. Recognizing this now will create a much stronger Coventry going forward and a much faster recovery. This obviously means that special interests will have to be set aside, however charity and voluntary commerce will as always provide for these things if the need or desire truly exists. Just because it's not compelled by force does not mean it simply cannot be done, let people make their own free decisions. This is the only way to truly assess value. Restraint now will make a better tomorrow and good ideas don't require force.

Taxation is Theft.

In Liberty,
Chris Morgan
62 North Ayers Rd

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
I received the mailer sent out by the town expressing their desire to go forward with a budget vote binding the taxpayers but held only by the members of the Town Council. The idea that this could happen is a blatant affront to the democratic process and the virtue of Home rule that is guaranteed to us by both the State constitution and the town charter.

While I understand the concern to keep folks safe and healthy during this pandemic it is not unreasonable to find a method to safely execute a vote. There are many facilities available throughout town. Schools currently being unused with large gymnasiums, fire houses etc, where a socially distant and safe setups could be achieved for voters to attend and pole workers to be protected. It patently defies reason to think that we, from 6am to 8pm cannot accommodate our voters in a safe manner yet Walmart stores can safely handle a load of 900 people an hour. Perhaps the manner in which we vote looks different as well, or is a multiple day affair, but certainly this can be done.

I also understand the consideration given to the executive order by Governor Ned Lamont however in this case this unjust act must be ignored. Executive orders unilaterally drafted by the Governor do not have the power to supercede the States constitutional guarantees to things like Homerule and the process of casting our vote for these things that are a direct effect on our lives. In the face of such an act it is the duty of the people and our elected leaders to disobey and move forward with what is right.

The Founding and establishing documents of our country, state, and even town exist for the purpose not of spelling out what the government can do, but of the limits to their influence, and in this case most importantly their responsibility to protect the rights of the people, and the democracy of the republic.

The world is a dangerous place, and now more than ever we have to be smart about how we go about our business. That does not mean we give up on everything. A vote not given to the people holds no weight, and will haunt the validity of this budget and council for time to come. The people absolutely have to be afforded a true ability to express their voice.

If the council truly is entertaining the idea of undercutting the peoples voice by going forward with this vote I call on the council members to, by way of motion and the appropriate discussions and votes there of, go on record that they feel this action meets the criteria of the U.S. constitution, CT state constitution, and the oaths they swore upon taking office.

I implore the Council, do what's right. Regardless of where anyone on the Council stands on the contents of the budget, do not silence the voice of the people. They are the town, and you chose to serve them.

In Liberty,
Chris Morgan
62 North Ayers Rd

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Dear Town Council Members,

As a lifelong resident of Coventry, there is no town resource I have used more than the town library. Please ensure that the bonding and other library funds are approved so Coventry can get the full state grant that will sustain and improve this valuable resource. The library is particularly vital now when many of our citizens will be looking for new jobs as the pandemic winds down. The library must be of the highest priority in this budget.

Sincerely,
Mary Ann Hansen, Ph.D.
74 Avery Shores

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Indie Film Pioneer Dies Suddenly at 54
https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=http%3a%2f%2ffthirdpartyoffers.netzero.net%2ftGL3231%2f5ec1a4fa6fa624f92627st02duc1&c=E,1,1x5rYds414-FxMyOHAdP-iV8ssVu6sCtpal8EVYU7uNIE4jzHiUSDKpgKovvglzIDkC1XZoOzdSfxCVm6xLOIPSTk8CEG6bQAbngwb2A77Y76dxYqFIVEQ&ttypo=0

US Launches Another Mystery Rocket
https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=http%3a%2f%2ffthirdpartyoffers.netzero.net%2ftGL3231%2f5ec1a4fa21f3924f92627st02duc2&c=E,1,1L4qBRTU_uPCFDxXHAbyHzysbVPXOliR5bfjyHcZjsuVxVTOJkuMasbyhjBiZK-T43AUvNojVWqt9aEglH7CinU6ONGotz3c1jaw42RN4DYLbL3h4.&typo=0

5 Iranian Oil Tankers Head for Venezuela
https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=http%3a%2f%2ffthirdpartyoffers.netzero.net%2ftGL3231%2f5ec1a4fa3d58524f92627st02duc3&c=E,1,9JUkx_nrsPb8fuMvVf-blclqhmjk-5F3eXLW5t5s9w6GHSYhAe0v2PFloaBXulhHx9u5RCvlz2R7mZimGR9Wu_F_0Ts5hJkiadsCl1ad_u_6gDMc,&typo=0
Amanda Backhaus

From: Steven Hall <gallohall@live.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 17, 2020 8:15 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please Support Our Schools and Our Library

Dear Members of the Coventry Town Council,

These are truly difficult times, but please don't sacrifice what makes Coventry a great place for families to live in.

The Coventry School System and the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library need your urgent support to continue to be the beacons of excellence that attract new people to move to our town.

The investment you make in these institutions will be reflected in higher property values, stronger community spirit, and a more vibrant populace.

The decisions you make in regards to protecting these institutions in this time of crisis will effect the ability of Coventry to come through the storm of this pandemic as either a strong and healthy community, or as a community whose best days are behind it.

I hope you choose wisely about which course your budget will set us on.

Sincerely,

Steven L Hall

40 Old Tolland Turnpike
Coventry, Ct 06238

Sent from my iPhone
To Town Council: I am writing to express my fervent support for our library! Libraries are an important cornerstone of a healthy community. Our Coventry library is no exception. It is a gathering place for people of all ages. It offers services and products that go well beyond books! Residents have the opportunity to find jobs, use computers, explore medical research and, yes! – borrow books, videos, and other available resources. It is a welcoming place for youth, adults and seniors. I am imploring Town Council members to support our residents by boosting and funding our library.

Elizabeth Woolf
10 Flanders Woods Lane
Coventry, CT 06238
5 years ago when my husband and I decided to buy a home in CT we chose Coventry because the town had been gaining a strong reputation for their education system. Since moving here we have not been disappointed. Our children have thrived in schools with dedicated professionals who have heart, creativity, and passion for helping children excel. Cutting the BOE budget runs the risk of slowly lowering the ability of these professionals to do their jobs. It is a statement to them that Coventry elected officials do not value what a strong school system contributes to the community and the economy of this town. Education is the top of my list as a parent in Coventry. Please support the BOE budget.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Petro
17 Deborah Dr.
To the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing to encourage the Town Council to enact the Board of Education budget exactly as presented. Many residents across the political spectrum are dismayed by the lack of a vote on the budget.

If the process does not appear bipartisan and collaborative, town residents will rightly question the integrity and the legitimacy of the budgeting process.

I would hope the council is able to achieve unanimous consent on the town budget in these difficult times. To achieve anything less would come across as taking advantage of disaster while our community is suffering from a pandemic.

The best way to achieve a bipartisan budget agreement will be to pass the Board of Education budget as presented.

Thank you for your consideration.

Philip Mann

258 Carpenter Road
Coventry, CT 06238

(860)990-3073
I want to again express my support of the BOE budget. Please pass the BOE budget without any further cuts/staff reductions. I am a parent of a child with special needs and the support my daughter receives from teachers, paraprofessionals, etc. is vital to her success and continued growth.

Thank you,

Lisa Dunn

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone
As the Town Council meets to consider budgets in these difficult times I would like to implore you to not make drastic cuts to school personnel, budgets, and town services.

Five years ago when my wife and I set out to find our family home, we chose Coventry for its character and most importantly, its strong public school system. In our time here we have seen our schools demonstrate high quality, increases in state and national recognition, and we recognize the schools as a core strength of the community. This core strength of the schools lead us to recommend our small community to others looking to put down roots.

Making cuts in crisis to services that diminish student support, increase class sizes, and undo earned gains is penny wise and pound foolish. We will get through this time but reactionary cuts in atypical times will permanently hurt this town and diminish its appeal to new residents as well as relatively new ones, something that hurts everyone.

Further, while I have been in this town, I have seen the town library become a flashpoint. There are those who don't see it as a vital resource to the town, our main street, and our community. It is absolutely a key feature to this town that serves as a community hub for citizens of all ages. After the schools, the presence of a strong library was a determining factor in our choosing Coventry. Fix the library, protect this resource. A fraction of a mill is not worth making our town lesser.

As an unaffiliated voter, I watch with keen interest to see real leaders who create well thought out solutions to our problems. A single-minded focus on cutting mill rate is not leadership. Support our town resources, support our citizens, and keep our town strong.

Michael Petro
17 Deborah Drive
To Whom It May Concern:

As a parent to three children in the school system here in town, the impending cuts to the BOE budget are a little disturbing. Eventually, though probably not in the immediate future, things are going to get back to the new normal, where school will be in-person once again, sports will be played, teachers will be teaching in their classrooms.

It's easy to say that major budget cuts and/or layoffs are needed when right now, no one is going to be in schools. I understand some cuts might be necessary, and that's fine, but all I am asking is for you not to compromise the quality of resources our kids deserve and need because they're not physically in school at the moment - or even for the foreseeable future.

The teachers are doing an insanely great job with the distance learning and deserve every penny they earn plus a ton more.

Our kids need to keep learning and the staff/resources that provide this learning is of the utmost necessity. Don't let these past few months convince you that drastic cuts need to be made.

Thanks for taking the time to listen to this rambling letter asking for you to not drastically cut the budget just because schools are vacant.

Ryan Darcy, dad to three boys (9, 6, 4)
1320 Cedar Swamp Rd.
Coventry, CT 06238

Ryan Darcy | Data Annotation Shift Lead
cell: 516-503-1718 | ryan@bark.us
www.bark.us
May 17, 2020
To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Elizabeth Bauch and I live with my husband and two children at 110 Seagraves Road in Coventry. I have a son who is seven years old and a daughter who is five years old who are both currently students at Coventry Grammar School. I am also the Coordinator for Coventry Special Education PTO Parent Group also known as Coventry Bridges. Our group has two purposes. The first is to teach and promote parent/student advocacy and the second is to help parents to connect with community resources. We also provide a forum for parents, teachers, staff and administrators to share concerns and develop ideas. I started this group two years ago to bring parents and district staff together to support each other and help strengthen our education system. My seven-year-old son has autism and receives many special education services and I wanted to use my knowledge and the resources I have learned about to help other parents.

My reasons for writing you this letter are twofold. One is to express my concerns about the upcoming budget vote including the Board of Education budget. The second reason is as the parent of a child in special education and the Coordinator of Special Education PTO in support of special education students in Coventry. We all know that these are challenging times with a lot of unknowns about the future but I don’t feel that cutting any more of the Board of Education’s budget is the best way to secure the future for Coventry’s children. I am aware that some of the unknowns are in the education system for the next school year. And also, that the children of the parents that my group supports do require a lot of staff, support and funds to provide them with their special education services. However, it is the District’s obligation by federal and state law to provide these services. I believe that it would be difficult to provide these services with limited funds. Our children do require teachers, therapists, social workers, psychologists and most importantly paraprofessionals. Sometimes these staff spend a considerable amount of time with our children and make their day to day lives possible. In my situation it would be impossible to raise my son with the support and resources provided by the district. Coventry needs to provide the best services possible to support and teach our children and to do that requires funds. I urge you to please not change the current budget. Please think of these children whose parents are in my group, who need the most support and give them and every student in Coventry the best chance at a quality education. Coventry’s portrait of graduate includes these students to. Someday my son and the children that he shares his special education classroom with could live in and work in this very town and do that will require a good education. Please do not just think about the money, think about the children, all of them but especially children in special education who I feel will suffer if funds are cut. It is true that our children represent a small portion of Coventry’s student population, but they are the most vulnerable and need the services that the town provides them. Think of the non-verbal students who are learning to communicate because of the teachers and professionals or of my son if it wasn’t for his teachers would not be potty trained and of the students in the vocational program who are learning valuable skills to prepare them to hold jobs and live in the community after finishing public school. I know this is a difficult decision to make and you have a lot of factors to consider but I urge you to think carefully.
and with your heart and make the right decision for every child in our town. I thank for listening and look forward to your decision. Thank you for continued service and be well.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Bauch
110 Seagraves Road Coventry CT 06238
Dear Town Council members,

I have taken the time to review Dr. Petrone’s budget proposal and the BOE recommended budget. Please know that as a parent and taxpayer, I fully support the BOE budget as presented and ask for your support in accepting it as is. The school administration and Board of Education have carefully analyzed this budget and it fully funds and supports the current trajectory of our school district. Any further reductions would be detrimental to our school district. Again, I ask for your support of the Superintendent and BOE recommended budget as is.

Best Regards,
Nicole Bingaman 343 Hannah Lane

Sent from my iPhone
Good Evening, It is the responsibility of the Town to ensure the Health, Safety, and Academic Excellence for all of the children in our care. To cut the education budget during a pandemic is not in the best interest of the staff and students. The challenges that face our Board of Education are huge. Among those challenges is Transportation, how do you safely get students to school without packing 60 children on a bus at one time? How do you keep students safely distanced in a classroom? How can you even consider laying staff off when you should be reducing class size, not increasing it? How do you keep the school cleaned on a daily basis with only one custodian in each school? What personal protective equipment will the schools need? What environmental changes need to be made? For example plastic barriers in the main office reception area? The list goes on and on but I know you get my point. For those who believe that children are not at risk during the pandemic please remember these children go home to parents, grandparents, family and friends within the community. The children in our schools today are the future we will depend on. Please don’t let them down.

In addition to supporting our schools I support the renovations for our Town Library. The Library is the backbone of every community. During my 22 years in Coventry the Library has supported myself, my children and my Father in Law when he lived with us. If we do not address the issues in the current building we will incur the cost of damage to books and the possibility of needing to move the library to a new building. Please do not be “Penny Wise and Pound Foolish. Thank You
Dear Members of the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing as a concerned taxpayer and resident of Coventry.

Recent discussions at the Town Council regarding the Town Budget during the current crisis are troubling.

Criticism of the Library leads my concerns.

Libraries are important to the maintenance of democracy.

Our founding fathers knew the value of libraries. Ben Franklin founded one of the first in America in Philadelphia. Thomas Jefferson believed that the establishment of a small circulating library in every county would be of great value in creating a well-informed citizenry.

Current rhetoric, and actions, on the Town Council diminishing the importance of our library will weaken the civic fabric of our town and are contrary to the principle of our great country.

Council member should heed the advice of our founding fathers to maintain and strengthen our library.

While prudence in spending is called for, it is of greater importance that critical services be maintained during the crisis. Our President and Governor have both devoted available resources to assisting citizens in their hour of need. The Town Council should do no less.

Thank you for your consideration.

Marty Milkovic

856 Dunn Road

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Marty Milković
martyt milkovic@netscape.net
203-437-0442
Dear members of the Coventry Town Council:

As long time residents of the Coventry, my husband and I have always appreciated the balance between the small town rural feel of the community, excellent education system and wonderful town amenities.

I am concerned regarding the current tone of Town Council Meetings which does not reflect the true feelings and wishes of the Coventry community we all know and love. I am particularly disturbed by the conversations regarding cuts to funding our library. As a municipal employee of a nearby town, I am very aware that work for our library, senior center, human services and parks and recreation staff is different, they are busier than ever! Libraries have become the hub of assisting as residents struggle with technology and find themselves socially isolated. Human Services (Social, Youth and Senior Services) keep our most vulnerable and at risk residents linked to the services and programs they need. I cannot understand why there would be any consideration to leave positions open or cut services! As we begin to reopen our town, there will be a greater need for the community services that connect us all. I implore you to consider these vital services that make our community a better place to live, work and play.

Sincerely,

Pat Schneider
8 Flanders Woods Lane
Amanda Backhaus

From: John Elsesser
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2020 9:58 AM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] oops ...audience of citizens

From: Parda Libby <lib.parda@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 17, 2020 8:26 PM
To: John Elsesser <jelsesser@coventryct.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] oops ...audience of citizens

Sorry John...hit the wrong key first time....please pass this on the the council

Libby Parda
68 Monument Hill
Coventry

To the Town Council

It has been my honor and privilege to have served on the Booth & Dimock Memorial Library’s Board of Trustees for 20 years. During that time I have watched the designated town library, the Booth & Dimock, develop into the magnificent institution it is today. The library has stayed in tune with the ‘times’ and in all situations in very creative and forward thinking ways. During the past couple of months the library has maintained services through the use of technology in many forms while thinking ahead to adapt to guidelines that protect the citizens we serve. Nothing in the past (or in the future) could have been accomplished without the hard working, talented and creative staff that we have at the Booth & Dimock and the Town Council members who have, in all economies, supported the mission of the library which is to help ALL residents of the community meet their informational, educational, cultural and creative needs...whether in the building, through technology or outreach. I am hopeful that this council will recognize the intrinsic value of the Booth & Dimock Memorial Library and it's remarkable staff when setting this years budget...the citizens we serve will need our services more, not less in the coming days. Thank you for your time.
Dear Ms. Julie Blanchard, Chair, and Town Council Members,

The Board of Trustees of the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library would like to express its recognition of the difficult and unparalleled economic times that our town, our state, and our country are facing.

It has come to our attention that the Town Council is considering a drastic cut to the library budget. We would like to take the opportunity address this.

The Booth and Dimock Memorial Library constitutes approximately 1% of the town budget. It has been stated many times before this Council that the services provided by the library to the town are extremely cost effective. The board feels strongly that a drastic cut would severely impact Coventry, particularly during a time when our services will be needed the most. Free resources, job search assistance, tax filing support, are just a small fraction of what the library provides during an economic downturn.

Based on our budget, a drastic cut would affect staff as well as services. All services are derived from manpower. If the staff is cut to the point where we can only support full-time staff, the library’s overall availability and ability to meet community needs would become unreliable. I am attaching our latest annual report to reinforce this point. It clearly delineates the services our staff provides.

The Booth and Dimock Memorial Library Association has an Endowment Fund. The fund is used to provide services and programming above and beyond the funding responsibility of the town government. The town’s responsibility is spelled out clearly both in the legal agreement between the Town of Coventry and the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library Association, as well as in the Connecticut statute Chapter 190, Section 11-24a. The Library Board is charged with the practice of preserving and protecting this fund. Per policy, the expenditures from the fund do not exceed 10% of yearly dividends earned.

The Board would consider it a dereliction of its fiduciary duties to use the endowment to pay for services that the town has the responsibility of providing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Board of Trustees of the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library

Kathleen Willett, President
Tim Timberman, Vice President
Libby Parda, Treasurer
Jacob Orcutt, Secretary
Joseph Jankowski
Claire Twerdy
Mary Schweitzer
Linda Williams
Cory Chilberg
My name is Lindsay Darcy and I live at 1320 Cedar Swamp Road. I am sending this letter in support of the Board of Education budget put forward. I currently have three children in the Coventry school system and am amazed at all that the teachers, paras, support staff, and administrators are doing during this challenging time. I fully support the budget as presented and do not want to see any additional cuts having to be made from it.

Thank you,

Lindsay Darcy
Dear Town Council Members:

My name is Robyn Gallagher – 984 Main Street. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to address you during this important budget season.

First and foremost, I want to express extreme disappointment at your decision to proceed with the budget process now, despite the incredible uncertainty facing our town and neighbors. Just a few years ago, in the face of budget uncertainty from the state, the town council put off the referendum until the fall so that important decisions were made from a position of knowledge and residents participated in an informed decision making process. This year the uncertainty is much greater than ever before and the pandemic keeps residents in their homes. Despite that, you choose to forge ahead while actively robbing citizens of their voice in the process. The Republicans head the counsel. You ran on a platform of transparency and listening to voters. This is the opposite of that and you should each be ashamed. Ashamed to have stolen voters’ voices and ashamed to be making decisions not from a place of knowledge and transparency but ignorance and fear. Compounding the issue, you are threatening knee-jerk reactions from a position of ignorance. It’s not your fault you are ignorant. No body knows what will happen as things change day-to-day and week-to-week. We are all in uncharted territory. But you don’t decide to change course blindly in the middle of a hurricane.

So let’s talk about those knee-jerk reactions. First and foremost, you are threatening the BOE budget. Nobody knows what the future holds for our schools, whether they’ll be able to open in the fall and, if so, what measures will need to be implemented to ensure student safety. Therefore, we don’t know what resources will be needed – You don’t know if we will need:

- to implement phased classes,
- more teachers to accommodate smaller classes,
- more technological infrastructure to ensure continued learning at home
- more nurses for health checks upon entering the building,
- more janitorial services for deep cleaning classrooms.

Beyond that, our students are falling behind where they should be in terms of grade level. You don’t know the full impact – we can extrapolate that summer slide will be that much greater given that our students have not appeared in regularly held classes since March – but you don’t know. You don’t know what resources will be needed to bring them back up to speed.

If you claim to know any of these things, you are lying. We are in uncharted territory. Despite your ignorance, you threaten to cut the budget based on arbitrary figures and a goal made before the world exploded. You should let the world settle in and get a better sense of our new normal before seeing whether the BOE budget can be cut. But, since you refuse to wait to make informed decisions you should, at the very least, avoid knee-jerk ones that incapacitate our schools from responding to new, ever-changing demands. The budget proposed by the BOE is lean under normal circumstances and, likely, inadequate given pandemic related demands. It should not face further cuts.
I have also heard that you would like to cut money from the library. Unlike the schools, this is not a knee-jerk response—this is part of an overarching hostility to the library that has existed for several years which has been accompanied by ever moving goalposts. The library is even more important if we head into economic recession. The library provides support services to seniors and children, it provides access to the internet for those who do not have internet access in their homes, it provides access to knowledge and reading materials. Putting aside library renovation, any cut of the magnitude discussed from the annual budget would have immediate and detrimental effects to the operations of the library. Over half of the budget is staff and payroll related expenditures. Cutting 20% of the budget would require deep cuts to staffing. If you feel that the staffing is too great, please explain what you’ve done to research this issue—what time you have spent in the library observing its operations and/or your criteria or research into the necessary staffing that would support such an assertion. Absent that, stating that there are too many library staff would be akin to my saying I don’t see why you need so many coaches on a football team—I can speculate that one should be enough, but I don’t know.

The theme of this letter is ignorance and, more specifically the ignorance of this town council that now purports to unilaterally make decisions on town funding having stolen the citizens’ ability to vote. Fine, proceed in ignorance—I certainly can’t stop you. But please, at the very least, don’t use your ignorance as an excuse to rob the town of educational resources or the library.

Thank you for your time.

Robyn

Robyn E. Gallagher
Direct: 860.297.3704 | rgallagher@wiggins.com
www.wiggins.com

WIGGIN
WIGGIN AND DANA

CONNECTICUT | NEW YORK | PHILADELPHIA | WASHINGTON, DC | PALM BEACH

From: Gallagher, Robyn E.
Sent: Monday, May 4, 2020 4:51 PM
To: audience@coventryCT.org
Subject: Comments for the Audience of Citizens

Dear Town Council Members:

My name is Robyn Gallagher, and I live at 984 Main St. First and foremost, thank you for your attention to this letter and for your leadership during an incredibly difficult time. I believe we can all agree that there are heroes in our community—our first responders, our doctors, nurses, EMTs. For me, this issue has also highlighted some of our other town heroes—the teachers and school officials that have managed to keep education flowing to our children. I have now spent over a month intimately involved in the education of my son—and I can assure you, anyone doing this on a day-to-day basis deserves a large raise.

All kidding aside, I am writing about ensuring financial support for our schools. Our students have, and are continuing to, thrive under the leadership of Dr. Petrone and our Board of Education. The BOE runs a tight ship and the return on investment, in terms of our students’ performance relative to the funding the schools receive, is nothing short of amazing. Coventry already pays significantly less than many surrounding towns on a per pupil basis and despite that is
competitive with towns like Bolton and Mansfield. However, as amazing as the schools are – they aren’t (always) miracle workers. At some point the discrepancy between spending will be reflected in academic performance and achievement. Cutting funding can result in larger class sizes (in particular at the elementary level), loss of important opportunities designed to challenge our students to thrive in a modern workplace, and loss of athletic opportunities that promote teamwork. Our kids are our future and they deserve better.

But there is also a financial incentive… we are entering a recession. The best way to shield residents against large future mil rate increases is by increasing, or at least maintaining, the grand list. The way to do that is through the schools. Young families (like my own) pay taxes, utilize additional services, and support businesses on Main Street. The way to draw these young families is the schools. Our mil rate is already competitive with surrounding towns, a modest increase in the mil rate will not be determinative. You don’t draw families because your mil rate is 32 and your neighbor’s is 33 (although by way of reference, Bolton is 39 and Tolland is 36). You draw families with excellent schools. That is how I ended up in Coventry instead of Tolland or Mansfield. Now, that doesn’t mean writing a blank check to the BOE. There is a need for some balance. I believe the BOE has achieved that balance historically (as evidenced by the fact that we pay much less on a per pupil basis with outstanding results). I believe the BOE has achieved that balance this year as well, and I would ask that the Town Council not insist on any further reductions.

Thank you for your attention.

Robyn

Robyn E. Gallagher
Wiggin and Dana LLP
20 Church Street,
Hartford, Connecticut 06103
Direct: 860.297.3704 | rgallagher@wiggin.com
www.wiggin.com

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For the Audience of Citizens
at the Coventry Town Council Meeting
on May 18th, 2020

I would like to thank the Town Council for their efforts regarding the budget. As a first-time homeowner, I love living in Coventry and I am more than happy to pay taxes for all of the services our town provides such as good schools, a library, opportunities for recreation, maintenance of most roads, services that keep us safe, and services that keep our town running. For all this and more, I only pay about $8 a day in taxes.

At the May 4th meeting, Richard Williams suggested returning any budget overages to the people of Coventry. I do not think this is a good idea. I would prefer that the town use the remaining money to continue to improve our town and to support the town during the post-outbreak period. In addition, I attended the Superintendent’s BOE budget presentation and it seems that the schools have a very tight budget. I would support having the school use any budget overage to pre-buy resources for next school year. I would also support an increase to next year’s town budget.

Thank you for volunteering your time on the Town Council.

Your neighbor,

Carly Imhoff
146 Beebe Farms Rd.
Coventry
Good Evening Town Council,

I am writing to voice that further cuts to the Coventry Board of Education Budget that has been proposed is not a good idea. The students of Coventry will have much to catch up on as we transition back to school in the fall. If by some chance we can't send our kids to school we will need to find creative ways to teach them. These new resources will cost money and research. Please take into consideration all the hard work that has gotten our schools to where they are today. We have a phenomenal school system and I would like to see it continue to improve. Our administrator's have all of our students in their best interest and I trust the BOE in making the proper decisions.

Best,
Jaime Thompson
Town Counsel:

My name is Sean Gallagher and I live at 984 main st.

One of the primary reasons people move to this town is for the quality of the schools. If they just wanted rural character, there are many surrounding towns to choose from. People choose Coventry because its schools are competitive with towns like Mansfield and Bolton. These results are especially strong given we pay less per pupil than most other surrounding towns. However, you seek to threaten our success by cutting spending to the schools even further.

My suspicion is that you feel empowered to make these types of cuts because you know you won’t have to put the budget before the voters for a referendum. Cutting the budget, without giving the voters direct input, is akin to stealing educational opportunities from our children.

Parents are just now seeing on a first hand basis how difficult it is to educate our children on a day-to-day basis. If anything, we should be increasing resources to our schools, and not cutting them.

The library has also been an important town resource for educating our children. As town residents, we strongly support the library.

Sean

Sent from my iPhone
Dear Town Council, the attached Word document is a letter to the Town Council that the Board of Trustees of the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library would like read into the Audience of Citizens Portion of tonight’s Town Council Meeting.

The PDF attachment is the Library’s 2018-19 Annual Report, which we are requesting to be provided in tonight’s minutes.

Thank you,
Kathleen Willett
22 Windswept Way

Sent from my iPad
Dear Ms. Julie Blanchard, Chair, and Town Council Members,

The Board of Trustees of the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library would like to express its recognition of the difficult and unparalleled economic times that our town, our state, and our country are facing.

It has come to our attention that the Town Council is considering a drastic cut to the library budget. We would like to take the opportunity address this.

The Booth and Dimock Memorial Library constitutes merely 1% of the town budget. It has been stated many times before this Council that the services provided by the library to the town are extremely cost effective. The board feels strongly that a drastic cut would severely impact Coventry residents, particularly during a time when our services will be needed the most. Free resources, job search assistance, tax filing support, are just a small fraction of what the library provides during an economic downturn.

Based on our budget, a drastic cut would affect staffing which directly impact services. Library services are reliant on hours worked. There is no automation in library services. Thus, all services are derived from manpower. If the staff is cut to the point where we can only support full-time staff, the library’s overall availability and ability to meet community needs would become unreliable. I am attaching our latest annual report to reinforce this point. In particular, please note the staff-intensive nature of a typical day’s services.

The Booth and Dimock Memorial Library Association has an Endowment Fund. This fund is used to provide services and programming above and beyond the funding responsibility of the town government. The town’s responsibility is spelled out clearly both in the legal agreement between the Town of Coventry and the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library Association, as well as in the Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 190, Section 11-24a. The Library Board is charged with the practice of preserving and protecting this fund. Per policy, the expenditures from the fund shall not exceed 10% of yearly dividends earned, a sum which could not offset the deficiency created by a drastic cut to the library budget.

The Board would consider it a dereliction of its fiduciary duty to use the endowment to pay for services that the town has the responsibility of providing to its citizens.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Board of Trustees of the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library

Kathleen Willett, President
Tim Timberman, Vice President
Libby Parda, Treasurer
Jacob Orcutt, Secretary
Joseph Jankowski
Claire Twerdy
Mary Schweitzer
Linda Williams
Cory Chilberg
We are excited to present to the Town of Coventry the Booth & Dimock Memorial Library’s 2019 Annual Report. The Booth & Dimock Memorial Library is the designated public library for Coventry and is managed by a group of volunteers who make up the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees provide leadership and direction to the library by updating and creating policy, overseeing the library’s finances, and planning for the library’s future by utilizing community relations and technology. We are 97 percent funded by Coventry taxpayers and exist to provide materials and services to help all residents of the community meet their informational, educational, cultural, and creative needs.

Over the last year, we increased circulation by 2.5 percent, reference questions answered by 15 percent, program offerings by 17 percent, new patron registration by 22 percent, and program attendance by 42 percent! The Library underwent a large assessment and evaluation of our physical collection and online catalog, which resulted in a reorganization of our upstairs materials, and a more approachable and navigable space. The best use of our building is a project that we continue to address and assess every day, and it is our goal to make this space as accessible as possible.

Over the last year, our Teen and Children’s Librarians worked hard to cultivate relevant and fun spaces for our youth, especially our tweens in grades 4-8. Our librarians focus on this specific age group because it helps to ease the transition and bridge the gap between our children’s and teen services. At the forefront of our tween services is our Tween Advisory Board, which is a group of tweens charged with collaborating with our librarians to develop services and programs for their peers. TWAB gives our tweens a chance to use their voices for good, empowers them, helps them build leadership and socioemotional skills, and creates and reinforces a sense of community, all while being fun. It also helps to ensure that our library is delivering the services that they need and want, because they get to tell us. All of these efforts earned our library national recognition when Kayla Fontaine and Meg Schiebel were invited to present at School Library Journal’s Public Library Think Tank in March 2018. It also resulted in increased program attendance and library use by our tweens and teens thanks to the creative initiative of our dedicated staff.

The Board of Trustees would like to thank their staff for continuing to provide superb service to the community. On a daily basis the library’s staff organizes, plans, and prepares for programs, researches new publications and orders materials for the library, processes Inter-Library Loan requests, catalogs new materials, creates displays, manages our social media presence, assists patrons with computer questions, answers reference questions, re-shelves materials and organizes our collections, repairs damaged items, runs statistical reports, manages circulation and the whereabouts of checked out materials, checks-out and checks-in materials, and so much more!

We thank everyone who has give us the opportunity to serve them, and we look forward to welcoming all who walk through our doors in the coming year.

Margaret Khan
Library Director
Library Staff

Margaret Khan, MLIS
Library Director
Kayla Fontaine, MLS
Teen & Reference Librarian
Phoebe Metz, MLIS
Children's Librarian
Meg Schiebel, MLS
Children's Librarian

Photos from top to bottom:
Kayla, Margaret, and Meg participate in the photo booth set up at the October 2018 Open House, and custodian Manny poses with the book "Super Manny Cleans Up" by Kelly DiPucchio.

Nora Dexter
Julliana Didero-Mullen
Joanne English
Benjamin Garcia
Barbara Hall
Rachel Hora
Roslyn Kornfeld
Christa Kiedaisch
Abigail Maver
Donna Muprhy
Tasha Murtha
Peg Norris
Joyce Peterson
Erin Riley
Manny Rodrigues
Janette Smith
Our Patrons

Hear what some of our patrons have to say about the library!

"We loved the escape room...And we love the employees"
- Janis Fontaine

"I LOVE that you let me check out as many books as I want."
- Lyle-Anne Pelles

"Life long love affair with BDML thanks to my parents and welcoming staff."
- Joan Abbey

In 2019 we welcomed:
45,391 visitors
389 new cardholders
7,841 resident cardholders
9,686 overall cardholders

Photos from top to bottom:
A family poses after completing our Star Wars Escape room, teens fill up the computer area in our Teen Center, and young patrons pose at our Open House Photo Booth.
Services

The Booth & Dimock Memorial Library offers a wide range of services to its patrons. Cardholders and community members are able to use our public computers, check out circulating materials including books, DVDs, audio-books, magazines, and CDs, attend informational and educational programs, ask reference questions, receive home delivery of materials, use printing and faxing equipment, and so much more!

In 2019 we:
Circulated 79,650 materials
Answered 7,789 reference questions
Hosted 121,420 internet sessions

Photos from top to bottom:
Miss Meg runs her Live Action Mario Cart program, caregivers and children enjoy Baby Bookworm Storytime, and Boy Scouts from Troop 65 pose in front of the library after volunteering to do some outdoor spring cleaning.
Collection

With nearly 50,000 physical items available for circulation, we have something for everybody here! Our circulating collection includes fiction, biographies, non-fiction, mysteries, DVDs, magazines, audio-books, CDs, playaways, video games, board games, and museum passes. We also circulate interesting materials such as book bundles, large print books, Kindles and other e-readers, DVD players, graphic novels, and Kill-A-Watt Meters.

Our 2019 collection consists of:
49,359 physical items
1,300 electronic items
3,306 new items

Photos from top to bottom: The Adult New Shelf, featuring new publications and recently purchased titles, our Manga collection in the Teen Area, which inspired our Animanga club, and full computers among our Juvenile Non-Fiction.
Programs

The Booth & Dimock Memorial Library offers programs for ages birth - 100! Some of our most popular programs include our Escape Rooms, Laser Tag Nights, Messy Munchkins, Open Gaming, Animanga Club, and our three adult Book Clubs. Additionally, the library supports a Tween Advisory Board (TWAB) and Teen Advisory Board (TAB).

In 2019 we hosted:
435 programs
92 Adult, 94 Teen,
222 Children, and 27 all ages
7,586 attendees
600 Adults, 794 Teens, 4,746 Children, and 1,146 of all ages!

Photos from top to bottom:
A display features items from our String Thing fiber arts program, Kayla and Meg pose with our 2018 TWAB members, and a teen zips through the Children’s Room during after-hours Haunted Laser Tag.
Summer Reading

The 2018 Summer Reading theme – Libraries Rock – was all about music! Highlights of our 2018 Summer Reading Program included our Ice cream Social, Laser Tag events, Escape Rooms, and a book discussion by critically acclaimed author Tochi Onyebuchi on his book "Beasts Made of Night." Registrants participated by attending programs, completing challenges, and of course logging their reading!

In 2018 we registered
72 Adults
75 Teens
366 Children
 Teens read 316 books
Children read 1,798 hours

Photos from top to bottom:
Our program room is filled with children making slime with Miss Meg, our librarians pose as rock stars, and families enjoy our Ice Cream Social after the end of the school year.
Outreach & Accomplishments

The Booth & Dimock Memorial Library makes it a point to provide library services outside the walls of our building and participate in the Library Community at a local, state, and national level. We accomplish this by partnering with many organizations in Coventry including the Boy Scouts, Senior Center, and the Department of Parks & Recreation, as well as providing "satellite services" through home delivery, school and daycare visits, and participating in the Farmers Market.

Photos from top to bottom: Kayla and Meg present on "Kid Led Collection Development" at a national conference in Miami in March 2018, people sign up for library cards at the Farmers' Market, and Boy Scouts from Troop 65 pose at the dedication ceremony for John Pacholski's Memorial Bench, an Eagle Scout service project.
## Finances

### Expenditures

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries/Wages/Benefits</td>
<td>$336,110</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll Taxes &amp; Insurance</td>
<td>$27,564</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books, Periodicals, AV &amp; Programs</td>
<td>$42,300</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$35,620</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Maintenance &amp; Repair</td>
<td>$20,910</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Equipment</td>
<td>$10,250</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Purchases</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$13,125</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$493,897</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town Grant</td>
<td>$477,879</td>
<td>97%</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Grant</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>&gt; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$6,500</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Interest</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>&gt; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fines, Copies, &amp; Faxing</td>
<td>$8,600</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$493,897</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing to encourage the Town Council to accept the Board of Education budget as currently presented.

In a household of two elementary educators, my husband and I both know how important current staff and resources are during normal times, but especially during distance learning. So much is uncertain these days, but the commitment from our Schools is not. Please vote to ensure our budget fully supports Education, without further cuts.

In addition, I would also like to speak to our town library as a valuable resource. Booth & Dimock will be opening for curbside pick up soon. This will support our students during summer reading in a way our schools cannot. Both Ms. Christy and Ms. Kayla joined our K-12 Coventry School Literacy Council Google Meet to collaborate with our town's Library Media and Reading Specialists during distance learning. Coventry Schools are ongoing, year round partners with Booth & Dimock in so many ways. Please support both our budgets and students without further cuts.

Thank you for your consideration,

Victoria Philips
16 Cindy Dr.
Dear Members of the Coventry Town Council:

I am writing to implore you not to make devastating cuts to our Town and Board of Education budgets. As you are aware, the budgets in the two prior years provided minimal increases for contracts and the cost of living while barely maintaining the status quo. The Board and the Council worked together to develop and pass these budgets in the face of many cuts in State funding, particularly ECS.

I was particularly disturbed by the tone of comments made at the last Council meeting by some members with regard to the library. It seemed one member would actually like to close the library. The library is an essential part of our community. It provides the public of all ages with books, audio and visual materials and other programs that would otherwise not be available to them including assistance with technology. Computers are available for those that do not have them at home. During this difficult period, the storytelling has been particularly popular with children and families with hundreds participating. The library already operates on a bare budget so cuts to its budget do not make sense.

We are all very proud of the improvements in our educational system and the ongoing achievements by our students on State and national levels. People want to move to Coventry. I believe that our school system may need more money to operate next year (not less) with the guidelines that they will need to meet. Our town staffing has been held level for years; yet despite a growing population, more roads, etc., they continue to provide excellent service to town citizens. Certainly, the Council should not be considering deep cuts to town and school budgets and layoffs at a time when more responsibility will be placed on both staffs at our schools as well as the town to operate effectively and efficiently and to keep all our citizens both the young and the elderly safe.

Leadership is not just a narrow-minded focus on tax cuts particularly at the time of a pandemic. The Town needs to be equipped with the resources necessary to assist citizens during this time and in the future as we emerge from it. Please tonight in deliberating the budget show that leadership by caring more about the needs of our citizens then decimating the budget and find an appropriate balance.

In closing, I would like to thank all of our staff and volunteers involved in emergency services during this pandemic. You are doing a terrific service. I would also like to mention that the mini-parades (drive bys) done by the Fire Department help to keep our spirits up. Thanks to our teachers who have continued to provide excellence in teaching and to our hot lunch staff for providing breakfast and lunch to those students who needed them. I would also like to thank our Town Manager, John Elsesser, and our Superintendent, David Petrone, for the work that they have been doing during this difficult time to keep our town and educational system running smoothly. It is much appreciated.

Joan A. Lewis  
48 Antrim Road  
Coventry, CT 06238
Hello,

I

My name is Michelle Talaga and I live at 181 Cedar Swamp Rd. I am a teacher in the Coventry Public School District, a resident of Coventry, and perhaps most importantly, the mother of a CHS and a GHR student.

I am writing to you in support of the Board of Education budget. We can not afford any more cuts at this level. Please keep in mind the education of my daughters, Aubrey and Lilah, while making your decisions regarding the proposed BOE budget. They have already missed out on so much this year. Let us make up for it by passing next year’s school budget. It would be a shame for them to lose out on more.

Sincerely,
Michelle Talaga

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad
I am writing in support of the Superintendent’s budget. One of the true insights into a town is where they place their priorities and resources in times of crisis. The children of Coventry are in desperate need of support as they face the very uncertain and unprecedented times ahead. Reducing any part of the education budget at this time will be detrimental to them and the educators that support them, as their academic and social-emotional needs are at levels we will have never seen before. Please do not reduce the proposed budget any further, as they will need every resource possible in the coming year.

Thank you,
Katie Uriano
36 Windswept Way
Town Council Members:

I watched Sixty Minutes last night, and the Federal Reserve Chair, Jerome Powell made a few very interesting remarks.

"I would say the main thing is to get back on the road to recovery. And I think that can happen relatively soon, likely to happen in the second half of the year. That's a reasonable expectation."

"This (pandemic) is not because there was some inherent problem, a housing bubble, or something like that, or the financial system in trouble, nothing like that. The economy was fine. The financial system was fine. We're doing this to protect ourselves from the virus. And that means that when the virus outbreak is behind us, the economy should be able to recover substantially."

Among the options (for Congress to consider): extending the increase in unemployment benefits which expires in July and supporting local governments which are struggling with a collapse in tax revenue. Powell believes trillions in additional federal debt could be paid down over decades.

All of these comments that I highlight are to help structure my comments.

We are most likely not living in a long-term down economy. This is NOT the time to cut school budgets, lay off employees or make financial decisions that will take years to correct.

Our schools will need additional attention next year due to the physical changes that are going to be required. Maybe more school bus runs, maybe staggering classes. Our citizens will need help through human services, the food bank, finding jobs or housing by using the internet or other services at the library.

I encourage you to take this time to think longer term in making our town a great space for our citizens. Don't cut so deeply that we lose our common goals of good schools, solid services for us, and support for our town employees who have been working above and beyond for the past few months.

Someone made the suggestion to send taxpayers $5 or $10 back from any budget overage. That is silly. No one wants $5 back vs. keeping the library open or laying off a para-professional.

We all have different political views. But, this is the time to support our town's people as much as they need, and not cut programs so they die.

Jillian Wood Reviczky
110 Wall Street
Dear Coventry Town Council:

I write to express my strong support for the 2020-2021 town budget as proposed by the town manager and superintendent of schools. I urge you to adopt this budget without cuts in order to move our town forward while keeping any increase in taxes to a minimum. While there is an overall increase in funding in the proposed budget, the mil rate would remain unchanged from last year.

I have carefully reviewed the proposed budgets and strongly support their shared goal of providing services, support and education in a fiscally responsible manner. In particular, our school system's steady improvement over the past decade deserves continued support - not cuts. Our strong schools are a magnet to families seeking a wonderful town in which to raise their children. Our town library supports our school system, but also provides many essential services to residents of all ages. In my family, all of us are sorely missing the resources the library normally provides while we wait for an end to the current temporary closing.

I commend all of our town's employees and many volunteers for their dedication and hard work, especially during the current crisis. Thank you all for your service to our town.

Sincerely,

Susan Frarie  
24 Round Hill Rd.  
Coventry, CT 06238
My name is Julia McAleer and I live at 295 Pucker Street. I ask that this letter be included in the audience of citizens. I am speaking today in support of the library and our school system and I beg the members of the town council and our town citizens to NOT cut the library or school budgets. These two institutions are among the most important services our town provides.

I speak for myself and all parents when I say that our number one priority and responsibility at this time is to provide support and safety to our children as they navigate the upheaval they’ve experienced and will continue to experience throughout the next year. I would like to ask if any of the members of the town council have spoken personally to our town’s teachers and librarians before proposing cuts to their budgets? Are you aware that budget cuts in this town usually mean supportive staff positions are eliminated? In the past seven years that my children have attended Coventry schools, I have watched budget cuts limit our Art, PE, and Music classes and eliminate numerous supportive positions to the point that our schools are downright understaffed. During a normal school day paras are the people offering support and working one-on-one with students. They are necessary when the budget overextends a single classroom teacher to care for over twenty children at a time. During the shutdown these paras and other support staff are also the ones organizing and providing supplies, encouragement, assistance to overworked teachers, one-on-one teaching, and even providing food to families living in our town. These are the people who are most likely to be fired when budget cuts occur.

And the library? After years of town wide vitriol it is no surprise to me that the Republican Town Committee and its counterparts on the town council are making their move to attack the library and cut the budget. I will never understand how the library could have possibly become their enemy or how they can be blind to entire sections of our town’s population. Not only does this council refuse to fix the building issues, now there is a proposal to make cuts that will probably lead to people - our neighbors - being fired. Since the shutdown began, the library has been providing digital learning services. They’ve enabled our community to borrow ebooks, access tumblebooks to have stories read aloud, or visit the library facebook page for storytimes and art lessons. Once they are allowed to open the library will provide free internet access for job searches, resume coaching, endless educational opportunities for children who have been ripped away from their schools, and overall a safe place to be.

Any cuts proposed for the school and the library will make a miniscule difference on taxpayers. But they will make an enormous difference in the operations of two essential services. I do understand the desire to cut taxes, or to at least not raise them. But the schools and library cannot be number one on the chopping block every single year. There are no guarantees, this is an unprecedented time in all of our lives. This is NOT the time to cut supportive services that directly benefit all Coventry children and families.

Julia McAleer
Good afternoon,

As Coventry residents since 2008, we would like to voice our opinion against any reductions to the Town Manager’s and Superintendent’s education budget at the Town Council meeting tonight, Monday, May 18, 2020. We understand that these are difficult times, however we feel that the budget that was agreed upon for education needs to remain intact.

Sincerely,

David and Kristy Pezzino
49 Zeya Drive
Coventry, CT 06238

Kristy Pezzino
SVP, Director of Client Services

212-884-1412
860-331-1128

Save energy: copy only the necessary people and print as needed.
Kathleen Breitenwischer

61 Barbara Drive

I am writing in support of the Board of Education budget and for there to be no cuts by the Town Council.

If you cut the funding to our schools any further, what are we going to do in the fall if the State tells us that we need to have social distancing in our classrooms and that requires more teachers? What are we going to do if we are told we need to have social distancing on our school busses? What are we going to do if we do go back to school and determine that we don’t have enough money in our budget for cleaning supplies? Or if it is determined that we need to have PPE and the District is required to purchase this? You can say or hope that this would be funded by that State or Federal Government but history has shown that there are often unfunded mandates handed down. Is our Town Council going to step up in the next fiscal year and restore funding to our schools when there is no money to fund these additional needs? Or is our Republican led council just going to shrug their shoulders and say too bad, you need to work with what you have. If that means laying off staff, oh well. Sadly, I am afraid the current majority on the council would rather see lay offs than the proper funding of our schools.

Coventry schools have always learned to do more with less. However, next year is going to be an unprecedented year. We are going to have children in every grade that are behind where they should be. Those children are going to need resources. At some point, you have done everything you possibly can with what you have. Coventry will certainly hit that point if you take away any more funding.

Interesting to note that there is not one Town Council member that currently has any children in Coventry Public Schools. Could it be that most of you are not supporting our schools because you see this as a ‘not my problem’ issue? Let me remind you, you represent all members of our town – a large portion of them are parents of these children whose lives you have the power to alter for the better or worse.
To our Town Council:

My name is Jessica Hall and I reside at 745 Merrow Road in Coventry. I would like to express my concern regarding the town budget. Due to Covid-19, our educational system will face many new and unforeseen obstacles. The students in our town will need significantly more attention in all areas - academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being. We have yet to fully understand the guidelines the district will need to follow to address social distancing and, at the same time, rebuild a community of learners. Making changes to reduce the proposed budget, without any true understanding of what is to come next Fall, is irresponsible. Please move forward with the current educational budget, as presented by Dr. Petrone and the Board of Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.
Jessica Hall
Dear Council Members,

I write to you today to ask that you approve the Budget sent to you by the Board of Education and the Town Manager as it is currently.

The Town Manager and the Board of Education have put a lot of effort into ensuring that the budget is fair and equitable to all citizens. Please approve the budget that was sent by the Board of Education and the Town Manager.

Thank you,
Rebecca Vicki
152 Antrim Road
Coventry
Dear Members of the Coventry Town Council,

As you consider the town budget during these uncertain times, I ask that you refrain from making any staffing cuts or layoffs in the immediate future. Although in many ways our world seems to have come to a standstill, I know that much work is continuing behind the scenes to adapt to new ways of interacting and functioning. Without time to prepare or a road map for how to proceed, both town and board of education staff were thrust into a situation where they have had to recreate processes for nearly every aspect of their role.

I have witnessed situations over the past few months where both town and board of education employees have gone above and beyond what is expected of them. They have risen to the challenges we are facing as a community. We are in need of their talent, creativity, hard work, and caring for this community now and in the unprecedented months to come.

Thank you for your consideration,
Jillian Miner
13 Hetzel Lane, Coventry, CT 06238
To whom it may concern,

my name is Allison Conklin, my family and I live at 361 Broad Way in Coventry. I recently heard of possible significant cuts to our library's budget and would like to discourage this. My family and I frequent the library for borrowing and activities among other things. We should be supporting our library at this time as it will provide much needed support to our community as things reopen amid COVID-19 as it always has. When considering to purchase a home in Coventry my husband and I went to check out the library because we believe that a lot can be seen from how a town values it's library. Unfortunately in the time since we moved here it seems that the value of the library has gone down, something we believe needs to be corrected to help benefit the future of our town and the people in it. Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope you reconsider these cuts.

Thoughtfully,
Allison Conklin

361 Broad Way, Coventry, CT 06238
I am opposed to budget cuts involving the schools and the library. While my wife and I do not have children in the school system, I certainly appreciate the positive impact our school system has on property values as well as its draw for families that represent the future of our town.

As for the value of the library, I grew up in Hartford with a small, community-based library. As I grew older and learned that libraries offered so much more than what I was exposed to in my youth, I firmly believe that children should have access to libraries that offer a wide variety of books, materials, and services. Coventry’s Bidwell Library serves the entire community with a dedicated and resourceful staff. Reducing library staff and services would be short-sighted and detrimental to our town.

Greg Arabolos
132 North Farms Road
From: Allyson Forstrom <allyson.b5@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2020 2:47 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] town budget - library

Town Council,

I have heard that the council is deciding on the budget this evening (Monday, May 18) with no meeting or publicly voted referendum. Our family does not support the proposed operating budget cut of $100k which I've been told is 20% of the library's budget. This would be devastating to the library.

Our family loves (and currently misses terribly...) the library and want to see it operating and THRIVING for many many years to come. Please reconsider this cut.

Allyson Forstrom
369 Riley Mountain Rd
Good afternoon,

I am writing to tell you that I fully support the town manager and superintendents budget. I strongly oppose any further cuts that you may think need to occur. Please do not cause this town, our schools and most importantly our children any further stress at this time.

Stacie Simko
Parent of 8th and 10th grade students

124 Wolf Hill Road
Coventry
I would like to state that I support the proposed Board of Ed budget. I cannot imagine making any further cuts, and think the town council should actually consider increasing the budget to prepare for Covid expenses if possible. Making even more budget cuts at this unprecedented time will prove to be catastrophic to our educational system. We are already looking at a very real possibility of students being months behind academically due to the inability to be in a classroom. Our schools have done the best that they can offer virtually but that can never replace the traditional classroom instruction. There is no more room for cuts to this budget. You are literally going to force the possibility of not having basic school supplies or laying off staff, during a time when we have NO CLUE what we will need to prepare for in the fall. I can understand that the town will more than likely see a reduction in tax revenue this summer, however, I think there are other departments we can make reasonable cuts to that will not affect the future of this town. Good school systems are a driving force for bringing in more residents which in turn creates an increase in tax revenue. Decreasing the value of our educational system will eventually decrease revenue for our small town which has very little commercial income and majorly depends on residential taxes. I also believe we need to defer the referendum to a later date when we may have a more clear picture of what school will look like in the fall. It is our right as residents to be able to vote for what we want and that decision should not lie in the hands of a few people. I have seen that the Republican committee wants the governor to allow the right for residents rights to vote on town budgets, if they believe that then the town council should have no problem deferring the referendum vote until a later date.

Thank you,
Angela Rejman
122 Judd Rd
To Whom It May Concern:

We would like to express our concern on the moving forward by the town council to vote in a new budget at this time. We would rather see the budget referendum put off until the fall so that:

1) The state and town can determine what the new school year will look like and the associated financial impact.
2) The Town Council and Board of Education can put the necessary time into providing the town with a proposed budget.
3) Social restrictions may possibly change by the fall so that there can indeed be a right to have our voices heard at the poll box.

Thank you for taking the time to read our thoughts and concerns.

God bless,
Tammy and Jay Anderson
80 Lancaster Road, Coventry
Coventry Town Council,

Hello, my name is Christa Kiedaisch and although I am writing as a concerned resident of Coventry, I will disclose that I am the current Children’s Librarian for the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library. My statement today is my own as a Coventry resident, not that of my employer. I understand that the budget currently being put out by the Council will drastically cut the library’s budget. A cut this large will have a huge, negative impact on the services provided by the library that patrons love and need.

The decision to take on the opportunity to fill the role of Children’s Librarian for the Booth and Dimock Library was one of the easiest I have ever needed to make. What has stood out to me the most is the unparalleled sense of community held within the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library. Knowing the names and stories of each patron that walks through the door is common practice among each staff member. Every person who comes through the door feels as though you are seeing an old friend.

I have personally witnessed such high levels of care between staff and patrons on both the giving and receiving end. When I worked as a circulation assistant and graduated with my Master’s, my first congratulations came from the staff and patrons at the Booth and Dimock Library. I was able to offer help and resources for those curious about specific topics, or even those facing some of the hardest points in their lives. Working now as the Children’s Librarian, I have witnessed children read their first words while reading their favorite book in our Calm Down Cave, cried with caretakers as their child takes their first step during Messy Munchkins, and helped children to become more confident readers. As the Children’s Librarian for Booth and Dimock, I am the bearer of many roles. I am responsible for duties such as children’s programming, book ordering and cataloguing, and outreach to many schools and daycares including CGS, GHR, and monthly visits to each classroom at HEEC. Many other libraries in the state spread these responsibilities out among two, three, and sometimes even more children’s librarians. Taking on all these roles is something I greatly enjoy, however would be close to impossible without the help of my wonderful support staff at the circulation desk.

If our budget is cut this drastically, it could mean losing staff that are essential to allowing the library to operate and who make this library so special. It would also mean being unable to provide the programming where so many smiles and important milestones happen. The Booth and Dimock Memorial Library has proved to the community that a library is so much more than a repository for books. I urge you to reconsider such a large cut to the library’s budget, and help us to maintain the wonderful place for the community that has been created at Booth and Dimock.

Sincerely,
Christa Kiedaisch, MLIS
88 Standish Road, Coventry CT, 06238
Hello,
It has come to my attention that some very deep budget cuts will be discussed tonight pertaining to education.

I am writing to ask you to reconsider making deep budget cuts with regards to our education budget. Education is everything. In this day and age, teachers are being asked to do more with less on a daily basis, and the consequences of this are seen daily!! We cannot responsibly cut into our education budget any further. Please carefully consider these important decisions.

PLEASE put politics aside and put children first when making these decisions. It would be completely irresponsible to make deep cuts with regards to our education budget.

Thank you.
Jennifer Miller
Get Outlook for iOS
Good evening Council Members,

I am writing tonight in regard to the ongoing budget discussions and tonight’s potential budget action. I have been watching all of the Town Council and Board of Education meetings since they went virtual. As such, I would first ask that Council address the absence of the meeting stream on YouTube recently, and the near impossibility of hearing the meeting proceedings when watching at home on a television. I understand and respect that this is how we can safely “attend” meetings right now, but in the absence of functional sound equipment citizens are left frustrated and are likely to disengage when we need them most.

Recent deliberations among the Town Council have left me wondering what, exactly, the priority of this body is. To me, the charge of a governing body is, first and foremost, to advocate for its citizenry and lead in a manner that gives voice to the voiceless. Residents of this town who are very young, very old, or financially depressed are the ones who need you the most, especially now. This is why it is astonishing that Council should consider submitting a budget that would directly and disproportionately damage those populations.

Human Services, Senior Services, and our town’s library are fundamental tools that we must shore up and keep running as we move into whatever the new world looks like. As we begin to come out and check in on those around us, people will need more support now than ever to get back onto their own two feet and live a good quality of life. Plenty has been said to disparage the library by a couple of members of council without any factual evidence to back it up. “That’s just my opinion” isn’t good governance. The numbers consistently back up that residents want and need these services, and it is your responsibility to keep them up and running.

The Coventry Public School system has made huge gains in its metrics in recent years, all while running on a very lean budget with increases well below many districts. We spend hundreds less per pupil every year than other comparable districts, and Dr. Petrone and the Board of Education have made the best of what they have. This year Council has already asked for significant concessions to their proposed budget and the BOE not only met the original goal set forward, it exceeded it.

Cutting additional funding from next year’s education budget in light of current circumstances and the vast unknown landscape of next school year is the definition of foolishness. We cannot expect our educational system to meet these students wherever they are and in whatever manner they can come August, and then to not only lift them back up past the biggest summer slide we’ll ever see, but to be able to guide them toward achieving appropriate grade level gains in a single, undoubtedly tumultuous year- AND expect them to do that with potentially fewer staff and resources than we currently have.

Additionally, it is very likely that next school year will require additional resources in multiple areas - social, emotional, academic, janitorial, special education, supplies, equipment, and technology just to name a few - in order to run the most effective educational programming. Further cuts would seriously hinder the district’s ability to serve their students.
I am so proud to be a Coventry resident, and to have my kids attend schools filled with educators who sincerely care and give their hearts as well as their expertise to our kids. Our schools make people want to move to Coventry. We need to safeguard the ability for our educators to meet the needs of every child receiving an education here so we can come out of this stronger, not weaker.

That is the choice before you. To rise above your deeply partisan and blatantly political agenda in order to make this town better as a whole. Do the right thing, please.

Sincerely,
Emma Eaton, 41 Sean Circle.
Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express my full support of the manager's and superintendent's budgets, as proposed, without making any cuts.

Thank you,
Janine Elliott
164 Root Road
Coventry, CT 06238
Good evening,

I am writing to express my support for the current proposed budgets of the town manager and board of education. I would not be in support of any additional cuts to spending in either budget.

Thank you,

Brandon Elliott
164 Root Rd, Coventry, CT 06238
Coventry Town Council Members,

My name is Kelly Sobol and I reside at 343 Riley Mountain Rd.

I am sending this email tonight to address what I, and many other residents feel is a very important issue facing our town right now. An issue that if not handled appropriately has the potential to negatively impact the students and families in this town, as well as our top-rated education system, its teachers and administrators. What I am referring to is our town budget and conversation around the potential further cuts to the Board of Education budget.

Through this year’s budget processes you have already asked the Board of Education to cut their already conservative 1.96% budget. In February they came back to the table with a new budget of 1.42%. It is clear that they are doing what they can to support your goal of an attempt to get to your 0% tax increase, but I ask you... are you doing what YOU can to support their goals of supporting our children’s education?

In a normal school year any significant cut to our Board of Education budget can be detrimental to our education system. Currently the climate of education for our children is unpredictable and dynamic and it will continue to be that way as we move through the next year. We don’t know what to expect as we look towards reopening the doors to Coventry Public Schools in the fall. Will we need reduced class sizes? Will we need more janitorial staff for proper cleaning and sanitation of buildings and shared equipment? Will we need plexiglass barriers? Will we need PPE for all students and staff? Will we need more substitute teachers as staff is out if they become infected? Will we need to make cuts to max capacity for buses, requiring an increase in our fleet?

These are all questions that we do not yet have answers to. It would be irresponsible for us to not create the ability within our budget to properly support our students and faculty when it is time for them to return to learning within our buildings in the fall. We have a responsibility as a community to ensure that we give them the right tools and resources to have the best education possible in a SAFE environment.

YOU as council members have been elected into your positions to makes decisions on behalf of ALL members of this community, that includes the students that have just started week 10 of distance learning today. Those are the students that will require additional support and resources from our amazing educators when they return to school in the fall. Those are the students that will require us to provide additional safety measures in our schools that we don’t currently have in place today. All of these things cost money and we have an obligation to prepare for those needs to the best of our ability.
I am asking that you as a council come together as a unified body, not as two partisan sides, and make decisions about our town budget that BEST SUPPORT EDUCATION by making no further cuts to the Board of Education budget. Any further cuts to the Board of Education budget will be irreversible in their impacts to the students, staff and the educational system in place in Coventry.

I request that this statement be read into the minutes.

Thank you,

Kelly Sobol
To our Town Council -

We urge the Council to insure that the Proposed Property Tax Revenue Total for FY 20-21 is no higher than that for FY 19-20. Given the increased Grand List due to revaluation, we urge the Council to lower the mil rate by the same percent to achieve this level amount of total revenue.

With so many Coventry families struggling with their finances currently and into the future due to COVID-19, now is the time to insure no increase in the average family's tax bill. Our neighbor's appraisal went up over 25% due to revaluation. Without a mil rate reduction, she will pay close to $1000 more this year. Our appraisal also went up and we will owe over $1000 more unless the mil rate is lowered.

Please don't put families into a position of choosing between food on their table and paying these huge increases.

Thank you.

Tom & Jan Weston
158 Beebe Farms Rd.
860-208-2863
First, I would like to express my gratitude to all Town and School employees. While there have been calls for all of you to “step up” during this time to support budget cuts, you all have done nothing but step up as you support students’ educational needs, provide meals to those who live with food insecurity, and to support the needs of all citizens. Thank you, also, to John Elsesser and Dr. Petrone for your leadership.

With regards to the budget, draconian cuts to the Board of Education and the Library will not prepare us for the future needs of our students and citizens.

In this era of the pandemic, schools will have to prepare for new guidelines at potentially increased costs. We do not yet know the extent of the “new normal” that could well include additional bus runs to accommodate fewer students per ride; staggered school days with smaller classroom sizes; additional teachers and tutors; increased technology to support potential learn at home initiatives; and more.

According to the Collaborative for Student Growth, schools are readying themselves for the “Corona Slide”. The Corona Slide, similar to the summer slide but more extensive due to the amount of time children have been out of the traditional classroom setting, will have to be remediated when children return – hopefully in the fall.

Further, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education is cautioning how difficult it will be for students to recoup the learning they’ve lost by being out of the classroom for what amounts to a third of the school year preceding their normal summer break.

As we prepare for the post-outbreak and post-pandemic periods, we cannot hamper the additional work our schools have ahead of them.

Additionally, the deepening vendetta against the library is both puzzling and disconcerting. The library has already shown its value and return on investment, using hard facts and not unsubstantiated spin. The library and its dedicated staff will be asked to provide even more services, once they’re able to reopen. It’s well documented that libraries serve as a key resource for people during times of economic downturns. Instead of continuously vilifying the library, we’ll need to rely on them to be part of the solution.

This narrow-minded approach to the budget, and lack of leadership by not developing long-term and thoughtful planning for our Town, does not set us up for success nor will it prepare us for our new reality.

I request that my statement be attached to the minutes for this meeting.

Carolyn Arabolos
132 North Farms Road
I request the letter below be read during "Audience of Citizens" and ask that it be added to the minutes.

Dear Coventry Town Council Members,

I am writing to express my support for the acceptance of the Board of Education's budget.

The Board of Ed has worked very hard to put together a budget that is even leaner than was originally requested by the Town Council. Asking for further cuts would be felt by our students across the board.

Coventry has a wonderful school system. Our schools stretch our tax payer dollars to their fullest level. As a town, we spend far less per pupil than similar districts, which helps keeps taxes low. Asking the Board of Ed to reduce their budget even further will seriously reduce the quality education for which Coventry is known.

Without the benefit of a crystal ball, none of us know what next fall will bring. Whether educating students in school, at home or some hybrid system, there are likely to be additional expenses. Such expenses might include: additional staff to monitor small groups of students, the purchase of more chrome books to help students with online learning, additional custodians to keep our schools sanitized for safety.

During normal times, residents would have the opportunity to have their voice heard by voting. As this is not an option this year, I urge you, as a registered voter, to please accept the budget as proposed by the Board of Education.

Finally, I ask you to support the Booth & Dimock Library. During a time of high unemployment and financial insecurity, our library offers invaluable services to our entire population. I personally look forward to curbside book checkouts but know our library does so much more for so many.

Thank you for your time,

Elizabeth Michel, 39 Ash Brook Drive
To the Town Council:

Your efforts to cut funding to the Board of Education and 20% of the Booth & Dimock Library’s operating budgets are an unconscionable exploitation of the crisis that has paralyzed our town. Our schools and library provide crucial resources to future citizens. Your willingness to sell them out to befit your ideology goes to show that you don’t truly represent the interests of the people who elected you. If you have any faith in or care for the town you claim to lead, you’ll restore these unnecessary and counterproductive cuts.

Sincerely,
Jesse-Douglas Mathewson &
Jennifer Doak-Mathewson
234 Old Eagleville Road
Coventry, CT 06238
--
Best,
JD

Sent from my jPhone
To the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing to encourage the Town Council to accept the Board of Education budget as currently presented.

In a household of two school aged children, my husband and I both know how important current staff and resources are during normal times, but especially during distance learning. So much is uncertain these days, but the commitment from our Schools is not. Please vote to ensure our budget fully supports Education, without further cuts.

In addition, I would also like to speak to our town library as a valuable resource. Booth & Dimock will be opening for curbside pick up soon. This will support our students during summer reading in a way our schools cannot. Both Ms. Christy and Ms. Kayla joined our K-12 Coventry School Literacy Council Google Meet to collaborate with our town’s Library Media and Reading Specialists during distance learning. Coventry Schools are ongoing, year round partners with Booth & Dimock in so many ways. Please support both our budgets and students without further cuts.

Thank you for your consideration,

Warmly,

Theresa Okun
Event Planner
Paints on Fire, Ceramic Arts, LLC
860-335-6984
https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.paintsonfire.com&c=E,1,5vg5d2HC5U1db4Y5Dyz7BzOszey1lkjKMvOpmlf3t6VI_A7pHmZK8E8-80ae1aKRHQevnElwv_v6mon514m5b1FS2efofYntHiYzg7_UeCR65YK26IIOCatQsT&typo=0
To the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing to encourage the Town Council to accept the Board of Education budget and library budget as currently presented.

The Booth & Dimock library has been an invaluable resource, before and during the pandemic, and will continue to be one after the quarantine ends. Our library supports the people of our town in all of the different demographics, including but not limited to homework help, technological help, resume writing support and guidance, and assistance conducting job searches.

I know that my family, and many families that I’ve spoken with, are eager for the day that we can return to the library for book checkout and to attend the various programs that they offer.

The number of people attending library programs, checking out materials and asking for assistance has not been inflated as previously and erroneously suggested.

Additionally, I would like to ask that we support our public education. The teachers and staff have been doing a great job supporting students during this unprecedented time of distance learning, and making further cuts will be detrimental when the students are able to gather once again.

Our Town has been recognized for having an outstanding Education system. Our local schools and our Town library are a draw for people who are looking for a place to move to. Cutting funds to these two institutions is not the answer.

Please vote to ensure our budget fully supports Education and our Town library, without further cuts.

Thank you for your consideration,

Stephanie Dakin
113 Armstrong Rd
Councilmembers,

My name is Kayla Fontaine and in the interest of full transparency, I'll disclose up front that I am the Teen Services/Reference Librarian at the Booth & Dimock Memorial Library. Today I'm addressing the council as a new Coventry voter. My statement today is my own and not that of my employer.

The aforementioned is my formal title, but I wear many hats, so they say. I manage the Teen Center including collections and programming. I manage the library's IT and run our technology assistance program where I offer technology lessons to the public at the library and senior center. I help with adult collections, I perform adult reference services, I man our two circulation desks and the phones. I am de facto assistant director, and help care for the building and manage staff when often needed. I perform outreach to the senior center, CNH, CHS, Youth Advisory Board, and other town events. We're training our new children's librarian, so I'm also helping to manage our children's collections and programming during her first year with us. I do more, but it's a long list.

In many other libraries quite a few of those jobs are performed by completely separate people. So while some on this council say we are overstuffed, I could argue that I am "overjobbed." But I love my jobs and I love serving this community in so many different ways, so this is not a complaint. I merely want to bring awareness to this reality.

As you can imagine, I'm a pretty busy person during work hours, with so many responsibilities under my purview. I wouldn't be able to do much of this in a timely fashion without our library's support staff.

If I had to answer every phone call, I wouldn't be free to help someone with their resume at the computers. If I had to check every book out, I wouldn't be free to offer research assistance to a student. If I had to be the third person in the building to maintain minimum staffing for all of our safety, I wouldn't be able to leave for meetings, collaborate within town, and deliver outreach services at our schools and senior center. If I had to shelve every book, I'd have no time to plan and run that programming for our teens that provides vital opportunities to socialize and learn.

If the library loses support staff, we lose our ability to deliver services that our community relies upon. That is what this proposed cut would result in.

Libraries are not just repositories for books that can operate and serve the community with minimal staffing. We’re not all sitting here just checking books in and out. Our services make a difference every day, and in the age post-covid, when unemployment and poverty will be extraordinarily high, affected Coventry citizens will need library resources and library staff more than ever. It's a democratic public good that will play a vital role in the region's economic recovery.

I'll remind everyone that for every $100 spent on the library, it returns $350 in services to the community. The library is not "expensive." It's an investment for which we all gain significant returns.

I truly hope that you do not, under cover of a global pandemic, irresponsibly wield your emergency powers to injure a fundamental public institution that adds so much value and so many resources to our town. I ask that you support the Town Manager's budget, including that of the library and BoE, as presented and without further cuts.

Kayla Fontaine, MLS.
84 Hickory Dr, Coventry CT 06238
To the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing to encourage the Town Council to accept the Board of Education budget as currently presented.

With so many uncertainties I think cutting the budget would be very irresponsible and could cause more harm. This is especially true since we have no idea what next year has in store for our kids and teachers.

Please vote to ensure our budget fully supports Education, without further cuts.

Thank you for your consideration,
Nicole Dennler

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android
To the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing to encourage the Town Council to accept the Board of Education budget as currently presented.

I am an elementary educator/teacher librarian in another district and I know how important current staff and resources are during normal times, but even more so as we live in these uncertain times with remote learning. Our schools stepped up to a huge challenge to keep the learning continuous and their commitment to this mission is unparalleled. Please vote to ensure our budget fully supports Education, without any additional cuts.

In addition, I would also like to speak about our town library and it’s importance to the community. Booth & Dimock will be opening for curbside pick up soon. It is so important to keep getting quality literature in the hands of the children in town during the summer months. We are so lucky to have Booth & Dimock be such an activity community partner with Coventry Public Schools. Please support both the library and school budgets and students without further cuts.

Thank you for your consideration,
Amy Senna

Sent from my iPhone
Amanda Backhaus

From: Jennifer Rodgers <jrodgers334@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2020 6:02 PM
To: Coventry Audience
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Audience of citizens

Jennifer Rodgers
274 Hannah Lane

Good evening Town Council,

I’m writing tonight in strong support of adopting the BOE’s proposed budget with no further cuts to protect our schools and our children in this upcoming year. Further cuts would be especially damaging in a time when we just don’t know what school will look like in August. Our children need us to take care of them now more than ever. Thank you.

Be well,
Jennifer Rodgers
To the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing to encourage the Town Council to accept the Board of Education budget as currently presented. With so many uncertainties I think cutting the budget would be very irresponsible and could cause more harm. This is especially true since we have no idea what next year has in store for our kids and teachers. Please vote to ensure our budget fully supports Education, without further cuts.

Thank you for your consideration,
Nicole Dennler
62 willow glen dr
Coventry ct 06238

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android
Members of the Town Council,

I am writing this to respectfully request that you work collaboratively in a bipartisan manner. In this time of uncertainty and change, what we need most is a unified council that is putting the interests of the citizens they are supposed to represent, ahead of their own personal agendas. For months, this community has sat back and watched the inexcusable, disrespectful, and underhanded behaviors of some members of this council. It's time to grow up and act accordingly. It's time to put your egos aside and work together. When it comes time to vote together as a council on this budget, anything less than unanimous support sends the wrong message to the community and you will have failed our town. IT'S TIME TO COME TOGETHER!

I ask that this budget get moved forward without further reductions levied upon the BOE. In this time of uncertainty where things are changing daily, let's not unnecessarily dig a hole so big that it will take a decade for our school system to recover. The current council majority has made it clear that they want to slash school funding. Now with complete control over the budget, and by forgoing a vote of the citizens, what will this council choose to do?

Mike Sobol
343 Riley Mountain Rd.
Coventry CT 06238
Honorable members of the Coventry Town Council,

An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. - Benjamin Franklin

I am taking the time to write this letter because of my genuine concern about possible cuts to the Coventry’s Board of Education budget.

My family has been in Coventry for 10 years, and like many families, one of the most important criteria for the town we chose to move to was education. How the schools ranked. We also did our research and talked to people who had kids in the school system. I am sure we are not alone.

As a Financial Advisor, when I speak with young families about their goals, if they have or are planning to have children, you can bet, “town with a good school system” will come up.

So far we have been impressed with the school system, the teachers, and the resources they have. After health, what could be more important than educating our youth?

If we want to continue to move forward as a community, emphasis must continue to be placed on how we educate our kids. Our kids are our future. They will be the ones dealing with the challenges of tomorrow, and we must equip them to do so.

If you don’t have children in the school system, think of the bigger picture, the greater good. Maybe you are lucky enough to have had your kids already go through the school system. If anything, this should be where we apply more resources, not less.

Of course, nobody likes paying taxes. But we want educated kids. There needs to be a balance. If there is a need for cuts that can not be avoided, they should be delayed until changes can be well thought out, fully discussed and transparent to all and certainly should not be done now, when everything is uncertain, in the middle of a pandemic.

I respectfully request, that you make no cuts at this time. The future of our youth is too important.

Cameron Crouth
105 Deborah Dr.
Coventry, CT 06238
To the Coventry Town Council,

I am writing to encourage the Town Council to preserve the current library budget.

I currently live in Coventry with my partner and I am a Library Assistant at the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library. I believe that now more than ever, our library is vital for many people in Coventry.

Libraries do much more than lend books. Libraries are there to support the community—especially those who are hurting the most, and especially right now in our health crisis where many people are in situations they've never been in before. It is a shame to cut our budget when our services are the most necessary.

We provide access to reliable information and resources, content, databases, apps, tools and services. We provide tech assistance and a place where people can come together virtually in community and to get support.

We also plan to open for curbside pickup. Putting physical books into student's hands is indispensable for their reading gains over the summer, especially with distance learning. When we open again we will also be there for those who need support and access to the internet—which is so important for many vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Coventry when most of our employment opportunities and access to resources are online. We also are currently offering materials to homebound friends in the community and we wish to continue doing so.

Around 75% of the library's staff are Coventry residents and we love our community. Please support both our budgets and our communities without further cuts.

Thank you for your consideration,

Erin Riley
1102 Main Street
Coventry Town Council -
As parents of a Coventry graduate and a current student, we are respectfully asking the Town Council to accept the Board of Education budget as presented.
Now more than ever, our students needs MUST not be minimized or ignored. Our administrators, teachers and every single member of the school district staff have stepped up, doing incredible things during unimaginable times. We have seen the absolute need for technology, support staff and committed leadership. In a time of so much uncertainty, these needs are likely to increase. Our children & community need you to ensure that the education budget is not reduced.
Thank you.
Christopher Delvecchio & Terilee Boulanger
60 Alice Drive
Good evening. My name is Linda Blakesley, and I live at 27 Berry Ave.

First, I would like to note that as of today, Sgt. Mike Hicks is still receiving compensation even though he is not actively working. This is an insult to the taxpayers of this town, especially during the time of the coronavirus. Many of our residents are out of work right now. Many more, like my husband, are essential workers, being paid far less than a police officer collecting a paycheck while sitting at home. It is outrageous that an internal investigation is still being conducted nearly 8 months after the initial complaint. The taxpayers should not be held liable for the failure of the police to bring this internal investigation to a swift close. It is in the best interest of the Coventry Police to close this matter so that they can move forward with appropriate changes and the town can begin to heal. Prolonging this is only keeping it fresh on our mind as we enter the virtual voting booth this spring.

Additionally, it continues to astound me the lack of response and support for the victim of Mike Hicks from the members of the Town Council. It is especially disheartening that the women of the town council have remained silent in their support. This tells me they either don't believe the victim, they fear the police, or they perceive this as a political issue and fear voter repercussions.

Thank you.

Linda Blakesley
Hi. I'm Jason Blakesley. I live at 27 Berry Ave.

Another two weeks and Mike Hicks has stolen almost 60,000 dollars from the taxpayers. I'm glad his colleague of almost twenty years, Sgt. Opdenbrouw, is now investigating his inappropriate behavior. It's surprising that his sister, Detective Michelle Krukoff, is not the lead investigator. How did he fool all his brothers in blue all these years? Who at the Coventry Police Department received the initial complaint in 2012? Was there an investigation? I know the council has the right to remain silent, but it's not right to remain silent.