

**Steering Committee Minutes**  
**May 24, 2021**  
**Town Hall Conference Room B and Via Zoom**

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.  
**Present:** Matthew O'Brien, Jr., Jonathan Hand, Lisa Conant  
**Also present:** John Elsesser, Town Manager (departed meeting at 7:05 PM, returned at 7:45 PM)  
**Absent:** Julie Blanchard

2. **Acceptance of Minutes, April 26, 2021:**

Lisa Conant moved and Jonathan Hand seconded to approve the minutes of April 26, 2021. The following corrections were requested: Change all instances of a semi-colon to an apostrophe in Matthew O'Brien's name. The motion to accept the minutes as amended carried on unanimous vote.

John Elsesser left the meeting at 7:05 PM to respond to an emergency situation at the treatment plant.

3. **Reports:**

**A. Committee Chair:** no report.

**B. Committee Members:** no reports.

**C. Review/Possible Recommendations: Boards & Commissions/Vacancies:** The monthly reports were reviewed. An issue with the software that generates the reports, which caused the political party affiliation field to be dropped, was noted. The vendor is working on an update, and a correction was made and sent via email to the committee late in the afternoon.

Vacancies: CoventryVision is a priority. Two reappointments are on the agenda for later tonight. Three vacancies remain on the Veterans Memorial and Events Commission. Other openings include the Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee, Building Code Board of Appeals, Cable Television Advisory Committee, CHS Walls Code Compliance Building Committee, HUD Housing Rehab/Fair Housing Commission, Human Rights Commission, Inland Wetlands Agency, Planning and Zoning Commission, School Energy and Building Efficiency Building Committee, and Water Pollution Control Authority. Interested persons can contact anyone on the Town Council or John Elsesser for more information. People can also learn more about each board and commission, and fill out an online statement of interest form on the Town website which will be sent directly to the Steering Committee.

Expiration report: There is also an issue with the software that affects this report. The report does not reflect recent reappointments that were made to the Ad-hoc Protected Spaces Stewardship Committee. The glitch is happening if a reappointment is made before the member's term expires. This issue has been reported to the software vendor.

4. **Reappointments:**

**A. Ad-hoc Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee - Brown:** Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the reappointment of Charles Brown to the Ad-hoc Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee, term to expire 5/4/2024. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried on unanimous vote.

**B. CoventryVision - Lombard:** Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the reappointment of Francis Lombard to the CoventryVision Committee, term to expire 5/5/2024. The motion was seconded by Matthew O'Brien, Jr. A change in political party affiliation from Republican to Democratic was

noted. The motion carried with Lisa Conant abstaining and all other members in favor.

**C. CoventryVision - Mroczek:** Jonathan Hand moved to recommend the reappointment of Konrad Mroczek to the CoventryVision Committee, term to expire 5/5/2024. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried on unanimous vote. Jonathan wanted to note Konrad's significant contribution with the recording of Town Council meetings during the COVID pandemic. Matthew agreed, saying without Konrad our meetings would not have been broadcast to be accessible by the public.

5. **Turnover of Avery Shores Road to the Town:** A memo was received from the Town Attorney regarding this matter. It indicates that there are still many issues and problems to be addressed before the Town can accept the road. The Town Manager was not present due to a fire emergency in town, so no update is available. Discussion was postponed until the next meeting so that John Elsesser can be present.
6. **Consideration/possible action: Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis:** Since the Steering Committee last met, the State Legislature put forward a bill to declare racism as a public health crisis. A letter was also sent from Supt. Petrone clarifying their position regarding Community Conversations, which they indicate is supposed to be an initiative led by the community, rather than school-driven as a component of the School Choice initiative. This will require a different approach to recruitment and the development of an action plan. Lisa mentioned that the NAACP might be a resource to help us get started. Matthew noted the need to find a community leader who can chair a committee. Town staff support to this initiative was discussed, including the potential involvement of the Human Services Office. Concern has been shared by the Town Manager about staff resources, as Human Services already has a full workload and is also helping to cover a temporary staff shortage in another department. Matthew said we wouldn't want to have heavy staff involvement in the long-term, this is meant to be a community-driven effort.

Discussion of charging a new committee took place, which would be community-led with Town staff support. It was noted that the Open Choice program is moving forward with students starting this fall. It is unclear if the Community Conversations initiative is a requirement, or meant to be concurrent to that program. Additional details and a timeline will be sought.

Matthew said he likes the Town of Wethersfield's resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis, which they adopted on 9/8/2020. The entire committee has not seen it, so it will be distributed for review. There are 20 other resolutions around the state. Matthew read the resolution aloud (*attached to minutes*).

John Elsesser returned to the meeting at 7:45 PM. A fire along the fence at the treatment plant is being addressed.

Discussion resumed regarding the Open Choice Program and the Community Conversations initiative. John Elsesser said it has been indicated by Supt. Petrone that the two programs are not connected. There was a miscommunication issue, so this was news to us. We have lost some start-up time due to this, and would essentially need to start over. Jonathan said given this clarification, we can move forward with our concurrent programs. The summer months are not practical to take on a project of this magnitude. September-January was suggested as a preliminary timeline.

Discussion continued about the approach to take: whether to establish a committee, or find a community leader who could spearhead the project. It would require broad knowledge of various community groups. Diversity within the community itself was also mentioned as a critical

component. CREC was also mentioned as a potential resource to help the community get started.

It was suggested to inquire whether the full Council would like to request Steering to move forward with initiatives for a fall start. John noted that there may be budget implications to consider for FY 2022/23, depending on the recommendations that are made. Matthew will raise it during his Steering Report to the Council at the next meeting.

7. **Turnover of Avery Shores Road to the Town:** Discussion resumed on this topic with John Elsesser's return to the meeting. John said we can invite Town Attorney Rich Roberts to the next meeting if the Steering Committee wishes to do so. As Attorney Roberts' memo shows, there are myriad legal issues beyond whether we own the road or not. We need to define what we would own. One approach might be to send Rich Roberts' memo to Attorney Twachtman, or to have Rich Roberts attend the next Steering meeting to be sure the committee understands all of the issues. Jonathan asked about the status of an updated report on the physical conditions in the area. John said it is being handled by the Finance Committee, which is dealing with the financial implications, while the Steering Committee is dealing with the legal and policy issues. Jonathan said it may be helpful for Steering to understand the magnitude of the financial implications, so we understand those ramifications as we are looking at policy issues. John said we have updated the list, but we haven't put prices to it yet. Finance doesn't have enough information, but they've asked other questions about whether we can levy betterment assessments on the houses or the association. It will be on an upcoming Finance Committee agenda, but possibly not during June as Finance has a large number of budget issues to wrap up for the end of the fiscal year. It will be up to the Finance Chair.

8. **Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM on a motion by Jonathan Hand, seconded by Lisa Conant and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Stone  
Town Council Clerk



Public Hearing: September 8, 2020  
Council Action:  
Effective Date:  
Moved By:  
Seconded By:

## RESOLUTION

### WETHERSFIELD STANDS AGAINST RACISM

**WHEREAS**, discrimination unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, and erodes the strength of society through the waste of human resources; and

**WHEREAS**, racism can have multiple dimensions, including individual racism that is interpersonal and/or internalized or systemic racism that is institutional or structural; and

**WHEREAS**, racism is one root cause of poverty and constricts economic mobility; and

**WHEREAS**, racism causes discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, employment, and criminal justice; and

**WHEREAS**, Black, Native American, Asian and Latino residents are more likely to experience poor health outcomes, such as heart disease, diabetes, and infant mortality as a consequence of inequities in economic stability, education, physical environment, food, and access to healthcare; and

**WHEREAS**, the collective prosperity and well-being of Wethersfield depends upon equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Town of Wethersfield will take a stand against racism and inequality; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town of Wethersfield will continue to progress as an equity and justice-oriented organization, by continuing to identify specific activities to enhance diversity and to ensure equitable principles across our leadership, staffing and contracting; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town of Wethersfield will promote equality and enhance efforts aimed at, addressing racism to understand how it affects the delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town of Wethersfield will use data in a more meaningful way to assess inequities and enable continuous improvement; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town of Wethersfield will continue to advocate locally for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and support local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to create a more just, welcoming, and equitable community; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town of Wethersfield will support efforts to embrace diversity within the community; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town of Wethersfield will use staff and community input, such as through the Social Justice Coalition, to identify clear goals and objectives with periodic reports to the Council that assess progress and capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity.

