1. **Call To Order, Roll Call:**
The meeting was called to order by O’Brien, Sr. at 7:00 p.m.

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

Members absent:

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

2. **Acceptance Of Minutes, May 11, 2020:**

**Motion:** I move to accept the minutes of the May 11, 2020 meeting.

By: Thomas  Seconded: Williams

With the following corrections:
- Page 2, item 4.D., first sentence –add “of CNREF” after “balance”.
- Page 2, item 5 – first sentence, remove “on”; strike the second sentence.
- Page 3, item 8, third bullet – change “fell” to “feel”.
- Page 4, third paragraph, second sentence – add “of the property tax” after “43%”.
- Page 4, third paragraph – strike the seventeenth sentence.

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

4. **Reports:**
4.A. **Committee Chair: Matthew O’Brien, Sr.**
O’Brien, Sr. stated he was pleased we were able to work together throughout the process. Staff, BOE Members, and Town Council Members were thanked for their hard work. O’Brien, Sr. was pleased we were able to come to a resolution that was agreed to.

4.A.1. **Governor Lamont Establishes Program To Reimburse Towns And Cities For Expenses Related to COVID-19**
O’Brien, Sr. summarized. This is the first round of funding from the State.
There will be more money that is available that can be applied for. Elsesser stated there are some structural changes that we are afraid to tackle because of the expense. We can put in for those and get them pre-approved. The fund will have $75 mill. Backhaus stated the $80k is what Coventry has put in for through June 30, 2020. Towns have until August to put in for expenses incurred because of the virus. The BOE is getting $111k to offset COVID-19 related expenses. The BOE should be following up through the Department of Education they should be submitting to first. There are avenues for the Town and avenues for the BOE that we have to explore first. Elsesser mentioned examples of what we may want to consider and get pre-approved first: set up an outside building permit station with software, go as cashless as possible at the Transfer Station. This is trying to minimize exposure we want to look at the best solution, not necessarily the cheapest solution knowing there are funds available. OPM published certain federal conditions for these funds. The funding is available for virus related expenses from March – December 2020. The State has been providing PPE at no cost as the Town applies for it each week. $81,004 has been awarded to Coventry so far.

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

4.C. Finance Director: Amanda Backhaus
Backhaus provided some details of the reports submitted that are through May 31, 2020.

4.D. Review/Discussion: Monthly Finance Reports
O’Brien, Sr. mentioned the Unencumbered account status.

4.E. Board Of Education Fiscal Reports: April 2020
O’Brien, Sr. asked Backhaus to find out about the paying of substitute teachers through contracted services as the BOE was using Kelly Services this year and the food services profit and loss statement.

Summer school can open on July 6, 2020, and the pre-school does have a summer program as well as some students that the BOE is legally obligated to school year-round. The service will be limited due to safety protocols.

4.E.1. Correspondence From The Board of Education
O’Brien, Sr. spoke to some of the particular answers given in the first round of questions from the Council and continued with some explanations on the answers from the second round of answers. There is $32k in additional COVID-19 savings through the BOE; if they are not aware of these funds, they will lapse to the Town. Elsesser stated the Town is in communication with the BOE about this.

5. Consideration/Possible Action: Year-End Transfers FY 2018/19
Backhaus provided some additional detail about the line items from the document Year-End Transfer Requests 6.8.20.pdf.
Do we want to allocate any money from the 1.5% account this year for the rebranding of the Fire Department? Elsesser recommends $25k of the available $57k to get the signs up with something that creates the history and the future. That was a suggestion as a rebranding proposal. The signage would be for four buildings. Thomas is agreeable to the $25k for Fire Department rebranding. We have already starting with the rebranding.

The BOE is asking for $100k in savings be moved to their 1% fund. Williams is agreeable to this. O’Brien, Sr. has no objection to recommending this to the Council.

**Motion:** I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Council the approval of the transfer requests from the Finance Director including $25,000 for continuation of rebranding of the Fire Department and $100,000 transfer to the BOE 1% fund.

By: Thomas  
Seconded: Williams

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

Item 7 on the agenda was discussed before Item 6 at the suggestion of Backhaus.

### 6. Consideration/Possible Action: Recommendation For Use Of Council’s 1.5% Fund

**Motion:** I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Council to make the three appropriations:  
- Future Covid Cost Reserve $99,999  
- Police car pulled from FY2021 budget $53,000  
- CNREF $99,999

By: Williams  
Seconded: Thomas

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

### 7. Consideration/Possible Action: Creating A Town Council COVID-19 Reserve Fund

O’Brien, Sr. made a proposal at the last Council meeting about creating a reserve fund for COVID-19. A case that was adjudicated in Connecticut involving Ellington raises some issues we want to consider is creating a fund. O’Brien, Sr. remains in favor of setting up a fund. Backhaus and Elsesser suggested we revision the name of the fund and include any COVID-19 expenses for any Town department that applies for funds. The idea is that $99,999 would be available from this year’s 1.5% account so that will still allow us the full 1.5% account for next year for unknown emergencies.
Williams recalls forming this fund for the BOE. These would be funds for the BOE should they need them and now all these revenue sources may come into play. The whole Council talked about it this way and there was a specific idea behind it and Williams does not think we should vary from that idea at all. The proposal had the intent of being used for BOE expenses that may be excessive and this was a stop gap. Now to make it available to all Town expenses Williams does not think that was the intent. Williams feels pretty comfortable with leaving it as is. This is about doing what is right for the safety of the students of Coventry, Connecticut and staff and that was the idea behind it.

Thomas agrees with Williams with the intent of the fund for the next school year and the expenses that are going to come out of that that we have no idea of what they are going to be. Thomas is not really comfortable either with seeing if we get sued based on the Ellington case, we probably wouldn’t. Thomas asked O’Brien, Sr. if his suggestion is to rename it but have the understanding that it would be for the schools? Backhaus and Elsesser have made that suggestion; O’Brien, Sr. is not sure what to do either. The Town Attorney was asked and his opinion is that we shouldn’t mention education specially. Backhaus suggested, and O’Brien, Sr. thinks it makes sense, to make it any Town-wide COVID-19 expense if they have that need. It would not exclude the BOE but it would not be exclusive to the BOE. Thomas stated that does not make her comfortable. The concern is if we leave it as it is the BOE could argue they could spend it on anything they want, asked Thomas. O’Brien, Sr. replied yes, that a court would allow them to if they took us to court. Thomas thinks she supports leaving it the way it is and is there a way to have a side memorandum with the BOE? Elsesser replied in the negative. You could talk to your parties and get a good faith agreement from them but they are not legally bound by it nor we can bind them to it.

Thomas and Williams agree to having the fund set up as previously discussed rather than it being something the Town might take money out of. Thomas feels the Town taking money from it would be a complete breach of the covenant we have with the townspeople right now. Thomas does not think we should back away from what we committed to and she trusts our BOE to not turn around and sue us next year.

Additional language suggested by O’Brien, Sr. to Backhaus (1) it would be for net COVID-19 related expenses and unanticipated, unexpected expenses net of any COVID-19 saving and (2) State or Federal grants or other sources funding would be counted as a savings in that calculation. Backhaus read the email from O’Brien, Sr. regarding this suggested language. Thomas stated it sounds to her there are regulations already in place for what happens if the BOE is made whole for whatever the expenses that are paid for by dollars out of this proposed fund. Why is (1) necessary and is that part of the agenda attachments? Who is determining what is COVID savings? O’Brien, Sr. replied the difference is that the BOE would have the flexibility of using the money for something other than it was intended, COVID-19 related expenses once it was appropriated.

Elsesser suggested some changes to the fourth sentence to try to address this.

**Motion:** I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Council to create a fund and fund it with $99,999 from the Council’s 1 ½%, during the current fiscal year, that would provide funding to the Board of Education to meet extraordinary and unbudgeted expenses, incurred during the 2020/2021 school year, that cannot be met by the funding in the Board’s approved budget or other grant awards or other savings, due to changes in the way Coventry schools operate and the changing requirements placed on the District by the State, in
response to the coronavirus outbreak, that are needed to provide our students with a quality education and keep them safe. Access to these funds would require Council agreement.

By: O’Brien, Sr. Seconded: Thomas

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

COVID19 Financial Response Plan
Elsesser explained this is show Coventry has a comprehensive plan for this emergency but it is multi-faceted, not just a short-term easy plan. The group monitors municipal bonds say this is not required but suggests we do a voluntary reporting on how the Town is responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

Motion: I move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Council to adopt the COVID19 Financial Response Plan.

By: Thomas Seconded: Williams

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

8. Discussion/Possible Action: Bonding Package And Timing Of Referendum
Elsesser commented if the Council chooses to be put anything on for the November election you have until the end of August to decide and a Town meeting would be needed. For the School Roof project even more time is needed to move through the steps to get it onto the ballot. Elsesser has seen water on the stage at the high school and seen photos of water in the band room. That is the most critical issue at this time in Elsesser’s mind. To obtain funding from the State an approved vote on the project is required. The roofs are now 23 years old with a 20 year life-span.

Thomas supports the school roof project. And agrees with taking the entire package to referendum. The Council will decide on the language for the ballot. Williams feels the most people turn out to vote in the November elections and we will get the sentiment for more of the citizens and to have the entire package on the ballot.

Consensus from the Members is to recommend to the Council to ask Staff to move forward in planning for these items possibly going to referendum in November.

9. Booth And Dimock Library Financial Reports, Contract And Relationship With The Town Of Coventry, And Information About Library Assets For Discussion
O’Brien, Sr. stated some information came to the Council’s attention recently raised some questions to get a handle on understanding the relationship between the Town and the
library and to understand the Library’s Assets. Backhaus provided a Financial Analysis of the library’s budget. O’Brien, Sr. had the thought of possibly creating a fund similar to the Council’s 1.5% fund. O’Brien, Sr. does not see a negative side of creating such a fund. The fund could be dedicated to capital or renovations. O’Brien, Sr. recommends a conversation takes place with the library about creating such a fund.

Thomas expectation is that such an account would be funded if there is left over money from the Town’s contribution to the library. O’Brien, Sr. replied that would be part of how the fund is set up and funded. O’Brien, Sr. would like to open a discussion with the Library on the subject. If they are agreeable the funding avenues would be part of a mutual agreement and up to the Library where the funds can come from.

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

   By: Williams     Seconded: Thomas

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Yvonne B. Filip
Yvonne B. Filip, Town Council Clerk

PLEASE NOTE: These minutes are not official until approved by the Council at the next Council meeting. Please see the next Council meeting minutes for approval or changes to these minutes.