

**MINUTES  
COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL  
SEPCIAL MEETING  
JUNE 13, 2022, 7:30 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX & VIRTUAL**

See a video of this meeting at this link:

<https://coventryct.viebit.com/player.php?hash=hlC3QauQoNiN>

**1. Call To Order, Roll Call:**

The meeting was called to order by Thomas at 7:30 p.m.

Members present:

Julie Blanchard

John French

Robyn Gallagher

Jonathan Hand - Secretary

Matthew Kyer

Marty Milkovic – Vice-Chairperson

Lisa Thomas - Chairperson

Members absent:

Also present:

John Elsesser – Town Manager

Amanda Backhaus – Finance Director

**2. Pledge Of Allegiance:**

All Council members and Staff stood to recite the Pledge.

**3. Unfinished Business:**

**3.A. 21/22-56: FY 2022/2023 Budget**

**1. Budget Deliberations**

Thomas read the following:

I would like to begin by thanking the many Coventry residents who took time to contact their thoughts on budget revisions with us. The key points that arise from your messages are:

1. residents are looking for more information to help them understand the budget process; my goal will be to develop over the next few months in person and video “tutorials” for people to attend or watch.
2. Please note that the town does provide many reminders about how to see the budget and about voting, including the special budget meetings that are held before our budget referendums - for this next budget, that meeting is next Monday. We also send text messages, phone calls, and emails, along with posting information on the front of our web site and

on the Town Managers facebook page. This includes the Budget in Brief which is an easy to read look at the key pieces of the budget.

Please make sure you sign up for this multitude of alerts!

3. After reviewing the many comments that were shared with us, it is clear that we needed to find a way to remain at a 31.15 mil rate - a zero mil rate increase. This is where all feedback pointed, including from individuals who recorded videos on the Republican Town Committee facebook page asking for the mil rate to remain flat. The budget revisions we will soon review, will result in a no mil rate increase budget. This has been a very difficult process as it means continuing to delay infrastructure work that residents are demanding. So I just want to ask that we all remain patient as we weather the current economic challenges. Drive a little slower on our more weary roads, don't use our athletic fields for anything other than their intended use and when they are resting between seasons, please let them rest, be patient with our DPW staff - they are truly doing the best they can with the resources they have, and the revised budget necessarily eliminates the DPW maintainer position we had added. Finally, consider whether you can train to be one of our Fire/EMS volunteers.
4. Speaking of Fire/EMS, we want to thank Jimmy and Bud for going back to their volunteer crew and pushing even more for commitments that will help us maintain our ambulance staffing. They have developed an adjusted plan that makes strategic use of volunteers in order to reduce our reliance on paid VinTech staff. There will be one paid staff person on duty along with one of our volunteers during lower call volume times per analysis of call trends. We will continue to have more paid staffing than pre-pandemic. We will continue discussions on this during our monthly Local Emergency Coordinating Committee. As a reminder, we have all along had approximately \$400,000 of ARPA funds dedicated to getting the ambulance fund out of the red.
5. The last thing I want to mention are the tax relief bills that were just passed by the CT legislature. I appreciate those residents who wrote and included these in their messages. I urge everyone to make sure to take advantage of these and to be aware of deadlines. Here is what is available:
  1. Child Tax Rebate: Single parents who earned less than \$100,000 in 2021 and two parent families that earned less than \$200,000. Rebate is \$250 per child up to a maximum of \$750. These are thresholds that should cover many of our families. I know that my husband and I would qualify - if we still have minor children! You MUST file with the State Dept of Revenue Services by the end of July.
  2. Households with earnings below \$57,414 will qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit, with about \$300 per filer receiving this credit. The average benefit will be \$700
  3. The legislature passed a bill that changes how motor vehicles are assessed, starting with the 2023 grand list so that we won't face crazy value increases driven by supply chain pressures. There are several aspects to the law, but the biggest is that motor vehicles will no longer be assessed based on the National automobile Dealers Association guide. They will be based on a depreciation schedule that uses MSRP and age of the vehicle. This should guarantee depreciation in assessed value. (HB5506)

Let's move now to a review of the budget proposal to get to a no mil rate increase.

*Lisa Thomas  
Chairwoman, Coventry Town Council  
Coventry, CT*

Thomas: Elsesser, Backhaus, and I have been working on a proposal. First is a decrease in expenditures of \$337,745. This is removing the DPW Maintainer position that was intended to help maintain our infrastructure, not hire a Summer Laborer, and reductions to Contingency, to insurance, to FICA, additional reductions to the library, and the Zoning Enforcement Officer has resigned. We are looking for a \$130k reduction to the BOE.

Backhaus: Under Debt we had included certain numbers in March; our debt was issued at a higher interest rate. Actual debt payments will increase the budget \$99,855. We issued our bonds at a premium. We would like to offset the increase by using \$120,000 of that premium. We are removing a small dump truck lease. Thomas: The actual total of realized increase of revenue is \$40k. Backhaus: It is a decrease in budget of \$40k.

Thomas: Proposing to purchase one police vehicle with ARPA funds. That can wait until we hire a new police chief. Elsesser: This is the traditional one vehicle we buy each year. We had proposed purchasing two vehicles. For budget purposes we are taking one out. Thomas: There is a reduction in the ambulance due to the work that Meyers, McLoughlin, and the volunteers are doing. Elsesser: We are adding the money for tree removal (\$40k) because with the police vehicle out we do not want the capital budget to fall below where we were this year because it is already \$200k below. The need that we have most in terms of public services is tree removal. Backhaus: We have increased our revenue assumptions by \$150k based on the motor vehicles increase in value. Also slow down the use of fund balance; that will show rating agencies that we are decreasing it over time. With the revenue increase and the cuts in expenses you get to a zero mil increase.

Milkovic: This is our third round of cuts. What is the total cuts from the Town Manager's budget? It shows we've cut \$1.2 mill. from last year. Backhaus: You've cut \$197,750; in this round you've cut an additional \$337k. From the first Council's budget you've cut \$527k and from the Town Manager's budget you've cut ~\$1.6 mill. by combination of changes and expenditures reduction. Milkovic: The first round we cut fat, the second round we cut muscle, and we are getting down to the bone with this round.

French: How are we looking for the end of this year? Backhaus: I am estimating we will have between \$250k - \$275k surplus of which Finance has recommended some additional appropriations for a variety of other items.

Gallagher: Because of how the EMS money was spent differently than what was budgeted for she wants to clarify the prior budget was not unreasonable leaving us now with a lot of money. French: That amount of money, relative to the total budget, is a very reasonable amount to have left. It was good process from the

Town Manager's office through that there were savings accumulated through the year.

**2. Consideration/Possible Action: Approval of Town Council Proposed Revised FY 2022/23 Budget and Establishment of Meeting/Referendum dates**

**Motion:** I move that the Council make the following appropriations for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 of:

General Government	\$10,973,292
Board of Education	\$28,712,461
Debt Service	\$ 2,932,192
Capital	\$ 723,500
Ambulance Fund Transfer	\$ <u>362,500</u>
Total Expenditures	\$43,703,945

By: Milkovic

Seconded: Gallagher

Discussion: Milkovic: This keeps the mil rate at 31.15 so no increase of the mil rate

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, French, Blanchard, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

Thomas: We went into this budget with the Council's goals in mind. We will need to revise those goals and reiterate that people be patient and kind to the staff of our town who are going to be continuing to do the very best they can but they do not have significant resources. We are all impacted by decisions and costs.

**Motion:** I move that the Council to adopt the Special Budget meeting for June 20, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. at the beginning of the regular Council meeting in the Town Hall Annex and the referendum date on Tuesday, June 28, 2022.

By: Blanchard

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: Elsesser: We are holding the Special Budget meeting in the Annex so we can broadcast the meeting.

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, Kyer, Gallagher, French, Blanchard, Milkovic

Against: None

Abstain: None

4. **Adjournment:**

**Motion:** I move that the Council adjourn at 7:59 p.m.

By: Hand

Seconded: Milkovic

Voting:

For: Hand, Thomas, French, Milkovic, Kyer, Gallagher, Blanchard

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.***