

**MINUTES
COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 21, 2021, 7:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX & VIRTUAL**

1. Call To Order, Roll Call:

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

Members present:

Julie Blanchard – Chair

Lisa Conant

Jonathan Hand

Matthew O'Brien, Jr.

Matthew O'Brien, Sr. - Vice Chair

Lisa Thomas

Richard Williams – Secretary

Members absent:

Also present:

John Elsesser – Town Manager

Amanda Backhaus – Finance Director - remote

2. Pledge Of Allegiance:

Council members and Staff stood to recite the pledge.

3. Audience Of Citizens:

(30 minutes – 5 minutes per person, 750-word count maximum)

Beverly Carson, 183 Standish Road – Has lived in Coventry for most of her life. She is here to speak again in support of funding and construction of a proper girls' softball field. (statement attached)

McKenzie Rivers, 61 Miriam Drive – President of Softball committee. In 2016 we began working with the goal of getting softball fields in Coventry. These teams need equal opportunity that other sports have. It appears history is repeating itself with the attempt to repurpose the football field for softball. The softball field was eliminated at Laidlaw Park in favor of soccer. We are again putting one sport in front of the other. The viable option of the gravel pit was the Softball Committee's location of choice. Sharing space between sports is not a viable option. Please consider the thoughtfulness that went into presenting a strong recommendation of the gravel pit location for the softball fields.

Addison Byam, 4013 South Street – Is a 5th grader that plays softball. Our fields matter too. Boys have amazing fields and it is unfair that girls do not have fields. (statement attached)

Ashley Pascarelli, 745 Merrow Road, Unit 164 – She is on the Parks & Rec Committee and a representative of the Northeast Panthers football and cheer organization, as a mother of future football players and cheerleaders, and as a Coventry citizen. The topic of conversation is the football field being utilized for softball fields. She has concerns and wants consideration taken when moving with the plans that were presented last Monday. In 2011 a grant was requested for a multi-purpose sports site at the former landfill. However, it has only been utilized for football. Laidlaw Park was dedicated by the town as soccer fields. The football site was deemed unsafe. Many of our youth went to surrounding towns to play football and cheer. Over the past year we have expressed interest in starting the program back up. In March 2020 the Director of Recreation indicated the field is not yet fixed so is still unsafe for use. The Director gave direction to speak to soccer of consideration of using Laidlaw Park for football conditioning and cheerleading during the summer if the fields are not otherwise in use. In 2021 we advertised and opened registration for football and cheerleading. In May 2021 she forwarded an email to the Council regarding the football field and her position on the board. A special meeting can be called with the new Director of Recreation to give background knowledge on where the youth football program is. They were not notified that this location was being considered for anything other than football. Council members stated they did not know the football program was being restarted. Taking away this field for football will eliminate the high school football program as well. There are many athletes from Coventry that have gone on to advanced college programs and careers. This is a family and memories are made. We will not let this program fall. We are certified and ready to go this fall. We are aware that Girls' Softball is not interested in using this location.

Ricky Rocco, 58 Babcock Hill Road, Ext. – He has lived in town since March. He has coached every sport in town. His goal is to help these kids shine bright. When he found out there was no football program in town he was upset. He knows what football can do for a community. It helps the high school program and opens the door for a cheerleading program. There are amazing athletes coming through this town. Every sport has a lesson it teaches. The girls deserve a field they can call their own. This will be helping the next generation shine bright.

David Moore, 5 Highland Road, Mansfield - President of Northeast Panthers football and cheer. Coached at Miller Richardson until it was considered unsafe. He has been coaching in neighboring towns since then. They have decided to join the Southern CT Pop Warner organization. (statement attached)

Motion: I move the Council move up New Business item 8.C. 20/21-91 to be heard next.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Hand

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Thomas, Conant

Against: None

Abstain: None

4. Acceptance Of Minutes:

- **June 7, 2021 Regular Meeting**

Motion: I move to accept the minutes of June 7, 2021 Regular Meeting.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: O'Brien, Jr.

With the following corrections:

- Page 3, third paragraph, last sentence – add “of Agriculture” after “Commissioner”.
- Page 8, item 6.F.3. – remove the first sentence.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Thomas, Conant

Against: None

Abstain: None

- **June 10, 2021 Special Meeting**

Motion: I move to accept the minutes of June 10, 2021 Special Meeting.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Hand

With the following corrections:

- Page 2, item 3.B., Motion – change “.102” to “.02”.
- Page 2, Discussion paragraph – remove the fourth sentence.
- Page 3, first paragraph, last sentence – remove “\$1k”; add “of” after “revenue”.
- Page 3, fourth paragraph, second sentence – add “on Monday” after “voted”.
- Page 3, fifth paragraph, third sentence – change “two years ago” to “this fiscal year”.
- Page 5, first paragraph, ninth sentence – change “of” to “with”; change the second “to” to “of”.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Thomas, Conant

Against: None

Abstain: None

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 members 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: Conant

Seconded: Hand

Discussion: O'Brien Sr. asked to have item 6.D.1. and 9.A. removed from the consent agenda. O'Brien, Jr. asked to have 9.B. removed from the consent agenda.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

6. Reports:

6.A. Council Chairwoman: Julie A. Blanchard

Blanchard shared the news that John Jack Lassick, our 98 year old WWII veteran, has passed away. The number and quality and character of people that live in this town never ceases to amaze her. Hand said he has offered to play Taps at his service on Friday.

There is to be a food distribution drive-through at the Town Hall on June 25, 2021. Elsesser said this is the last one for the summer with the school meals program doing meals. We will reevaluate the need but the numbers have been decreasing.

6.B. Council Members:

O'Brien, Sr. said he attended the Flag Day ceremony. It was a terrific ceremony including the retiring of a flag. There were veterans, the boy scouts, the Rotary, and current and former Council members. Tim Ackert spoke with the dedication of the lighting for his wife and a dedication of the bench and the placard to Tom Pope. Thomas was present and she said she had never been to a ceremony that included retiring a flag.

Thomas said she wants to talk about the Audience of Citizens portion of the meeting. She had some confusion about what is happening. This item is back on the agenda for people to speak in person with a total of 30 minutes allotted. We now have different use of email. If someone wants to write a letter with their concerns those have to be received through email by Wednesday at noon for the upcoming Council meeting. The agenda is published on Thursday. Those submittals will be attached to the agenda under Correspondence that people can read via the website. Thomas does not think the deadline should be on Wednesday. If emails are received those can be

attached to the Minutes under Correspondence but these are not limited to 750 words. Elsesser said the Audience of Citizens statements do not have to pertain to what is on the agenda. Someone may have another issue to bring to the attention of the Council. There is also the option to email all of the Members; these are not published. We have created an expanse of options of people's ability to express themselves. Hand said the email address could be added to the agenda for informational purposes. O'Brien, Jr. said there is a limit of fourteen people being in the Annex due to the seating arrangement for the public.

Hand said we did receive correspondence that was sent to all of Members. Many of the points that were raised here were in there regarding the football and softball and the comparisons. Hand said there were some meaningful discussion about perspectives.

6.C. Finance Committee: Matthew O'Brien, Sr., Chairperson

O'Brien, Sr. said there was a special Finance Committee meeting on June 14, 2021.

6.C.1. Monthly Financial Report

O'Brien, Sr. read his report.

Coventry Town Council Finance Committee
Report to the Council on June 20, 2021

We held a special Finance Committee meeting on June 14, 2021

Our Finance Director, Amanda Backhaus reported that as of May 31, 2021 the town of Coventry has collected \$31,375,434 or 100.43% of \$31,240,145 anticipated property tax revenue. This compares to the same period last year when we collected 99.31% of anticipated revenue.

Our General fund revenue collections are \$44,841,878 or 100.37% of \$44,688,125 adjusted budget revenue. This compared to the same period last year we collected total General Fund revenues at 99.23% of anticipated revenue.

Amanda reported that as of May 31, 2021, the Board of Education has spent \$22,675,526 or 81.37 of their approved budget of \$27,866. The same period last year saw total expenditures of 83.28% or their operating budget. The percentage difference compared to last year is 1.91% less of their approved budget spent this year. That equals \$532,251 less spent of their operating budget compared to what they spent as of May 31 in 2020 while also covering between \$300 and \$350,000 of unbudgeted Covid expenses in this year's budget.

Amanda reported that COVRRRA has collected 100.07% of anticipated revenue and interest. The same period last year saw COVRRRA collections of 98.03% of anticipated revenue. COVRRRA is projected to end the year with a \$170,000 balance.

The Sewer Use fund is in good shape and the Recreation Fund is projected to end the year with a negative \$100,000.

Amanda provided information about the formula that is used to calculate the mil rate each year. She said that because the State budget did not reduce Coventry's ECS grant by \$170,000, as the Council anticipated when we set the mil rate at 31.32 mils on Monday, the Council rescinded their first motion and reset the mil rate at a special meeting last Thursday. By plugging in the corrected revenue number, including the additional \$170,000 in ECS grant money, the mil rate needed to balance the budget that was passed at referendum is 31.15 mils and that is what the Council set it at. There were no other actions taken or changes made other than a proper recognition of this revenue and a recalculation of the mil rate.

The Committee discussed the Softball Field Study project and the chair said that he would like to send this issue back to the Council for their consideration. He noted that we recently learned that Todd Penney, our Town Engineer said that we will need to do a detailed survey of the property chosen in order to get accurate numbers for an anticipated referendum, when the project goes forward. The chair said that depending on the decisions that the Council may make, it is possible that we may need to hold a referendum as early as August or one in November and he wanted to move this issue to the Council to keep the project moving forward under these tight timelines.

The committee agreed to send the issue back to the Town Council. The chair prepared a report that is included on tonight's agenda to update the Council on the progress that has been made and the issues that will need additional investigation before a final decision can be made by the Council.

The committee discussed the questions that had been sent to the Board of Education about their reporting of Covid expenses and associated grant funds and their management reports. The members of the committee agreed that the information that was received from the Board was incomplete and did not fully respond to the questions asked. It was agreed that the Finance Committee would send some follow up questions to the Board and those questions were discussed. I am attaching a copy of the questions that the Town Council Chairwoman, Julie Blanchard, forwarded to the Board of Education on behalf of the Finance Committee.

It was suggested that we request a meeting with representatives of the Board and their staff who could answer questions about these issues.

I recommend that you review the attachments included on the Finance Committee agenda to get more information

Matthew O'Brien Sr.
Chairman, Finance Committee

To: The Board of Education
From: The Town Council Finance Committee
Re: Additional questions related to FY20/21 Management Reporting and Budget
Date: June 17, 2021

BOE STATUS -- from the Director of Finance's Report to the Council

As of May 31, 2021, the Board of Education has spent \$22,675,526 or 81.37% of their approved budget of \$27,866,548. The same period last year saw total expenditures of 85.28% of their operating budget spent. The percentage difference compared to last year is 1.91% less spent this year. That equals \$532,251 less spent of their budget compared to what they spent as of May 31 in 2020.

$18.63\% \times \$27,866,548 = \$5,191,537.8924$

$1.91\% \times \$27,866,548 = \$532,251.0668$

- 1) Please explain how, as of May 31, 2021, you have spent \$532,000 less from your operating budget than you had at this time last year, while also covering between \$300,000 to \$400,000 in unbudgeted Covid expenses in this fiscal year.

Even taking into account your June salaries and summer salaries and health insurance transfer, it appears there is a very large amount of funds available. Why have you been projecting a deficit for the year?

Please provide the Council with the details of your expenditures or encumbrances that you make in June and identify any outstanding charges that may get paid after June 30th but can be attributed to FY 20/21. Please also provide details of any transfers that have been made or will be made before the end of the fiscal year.

- 2) Please explain why the Board chose to display the sum of all unbudgeted Covid expenses, as a stand-alone item in your management report each month, and chose not to identify ongoing Covid savings each month to reflect the NET impact on your operating budget? Wasn't that misleading and not transparent?
- 3) We understand that the percentage reimbursement from the state for special education expenses has increased to above 80%. It has been carried as 73% in the Special Education Tuition Excess Cost Calculation report through the April report. What is the impact of that change? As of April 30th you had reported a \$70,682 variance.
- 4) Please identify all Covid Salary expenses paid in December 2020 and please identify the source(s) of those funds.
- 5) We understand that the Board has encumbered about \$90,955.14 towards the Board of Education's 75% of the Endpoint Security Platform Upgrades. Please identify the source of those funds. Did they come from your operating budget or a special fund and if a special fund, which one?
- 6) What funds do you expect, if any, to return the General Fund at year end?

Matthew O'Brien
Chairman, Finance Committee

Hand said he reading of the BOE's spending of \$24k included the word 'example' so it was not an exhaustive list. O'Brien, Sr. said the request from the Finance Committee asked for details of the expenditures. The answer was not a detailed response.

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

6.D.1. * Minutes: May 24, 2021

O'Brien, Sr. read the Minutes from the meeting about O'Brien, Jr. saying he liked Wethersfield's resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis. O'Brien, Sr. read the statement and it does not say anything about calling it a public health crisis. Is that a mistake and you will fix it when you go to Steering? O'Brien, Jr. said sure; it was labeled that way.

6.E. COVRRRA – John A. Elsesser:

Elsesser said this item can be skipped this evening.

6.F. Town Manager – John A. Elsesser

6.F.1. Projects Update

Highlights to Elsesser's distributed report are:

- IWA held a special meeting about the proposed digester at Hytone Farm. The IWA deemed it as an essential function of the farm. That is one of the two regulatory boards the project has to be reviewed by. Rich Roberts is still reviewing this matter for the PZC.

O'Brien, Sr. asked about the mention on page 5 of the walls and roofs for the schools. O'Brien, Sr. clarified with Elsesser that if we do need to we will hold a November referendum. Elsesser said this is rapidly moving. We had some good news on the walls report. They found it was attached so they will have to do less reinforcement. The Walls Committee is holding a special meeting tomorrow. They want to use a change order that was used for the past summer if the Council is comfortable using the same vendor. The head of the Committee feels the money we have allocated is adequate. Elsesser is getting the sense from the Members the change order approach is appropriate.

6.F.2. COVID-19 Update

Elsesser said Coventry was down to one case last week. The vaccination numbers are not increasing quickly. Try to convince people it is a good thing to get. Hand said the 16 – 25 year old age group needs the most encouragement.

6.F.3. Microgrid Update

Elsesser said we are starting to get some of the documentation ready. The preliminary timeframe to respond about a working committee is late July. The signed and revised contract has been accepted.

6.F.4. Appointment Of New Recreation Director

Elsesser said Leslie Fundshower starts on the nineteenth. Elsesser appreciates the work of the interview panel. Ms. Fundshower has worked for the past ten years or so with the YMCA in both the camping and other programs and the last two years as the Director of Recreation in Thompson.

7. Unfinished Business:

7.A. 20/21-79: Consideration/Possible Action: Participation In Sign-On Statement Against Antisemitism (Not Ready For Action – Referred To Steering committee For Review)

8. New Business:

8.A. 20/21-89: Consideration/Possible Action: Authorization To Apply For An Affordable Housing Planning Grant

Elsesser said the State has released grants up to \$15k to hire consultants for a State mandated Affordable Housing Planning study. Ours is due within this year.

Motion: I move to authorize the Town of Coventry to apply for an affordable Housing Planning Grant.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: O'Brien, Jr.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

8.B. 20/21-90: Consideration/Possible Action: Selection Of Council Representatives For Microgrid Project Contract Negotiations

Elsesser said his first thought was to select one Council member but the BOE appointed one from each party.

Motion: I move the Council appoint O'Brien, Sr. and Conant as the Council representatives for the microgrid project contract negotiations.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Thomas

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

8.C. 20/21-91: Consideration/Possible Action: Discharge Of Fire Transition Study Committee

Steve Pacholski was present. Pacholski said this is the third time he has been in front of the Council over the two and one-half years the Fire Transition Study Committee has been meeting. The Committee has completed Phases 1 and 2 and presented a slate of officers for the merged fire/EMS department. Pacholski expressed thanks to the people who participated on the Committee: Jodi Mitchell, Ray Eldridge, Ken Boutin, Josh Ziel, Craig Malan, Bud Meyers, Jimmy McLoughlin, Chuck Beecher, and Yvonne Filip, our Recording Secretary. Pacholski is here this evening to respectfully request that the Council move to disband the Fire Transition Study

Committee.

O'Brien, Sr. said he wants Pacholski to extend our great thanks to the Committee members for the tremendous job that they have done. This was a difficult situation and the committee has done wonders. O'Brien, Sr. said he thinks the Council has been overwhelmed with the actual performance of the Committee and the changeover of the fire department. We are thankful and excited about it. Blanchard agreed. Thomas said in 2007 we were closing out a fire study and starting a new study and there have been one or two more since then. It has truly been a heroic and patient effort. Our congratulations and gratitude. Hand said as a former member of CVFA, which is about families, knowing the loyalties present and seeing how the Committee was able to pull that together his hat is off to the Committee. The results are great, impressive, and in what he believes is in less time than any of us thought. Conant echoes the thoughts expressed and this was completed in a relatively short period of time.

Motion: I move that the Council discharge the Fire Transition Study Committee.

By: O'Brien, Jr.

Seconded: Hand

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

Motion: I move the Council move up New Business item 8.D. 20/21-92 to be heard next.

By: Thomas

Seconded: Hand

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Thomas, Conant

Against: None

Abstain: None

8.D. 20/21-92: Report Of Girls' Softball Field Study Committee And Discussion Of Next Steps

Todd Penney, Town Engineer, was present to give an overview of some sites that we are talking about.

The first location under consideration is the old landfill/football field. The 2016 aerial photos were shared showing four bleacher pads, a shed, the scoreboard, a trailer, and the goal posts. The wetlands were field delineated. Sewers are available for this location if we need to tie into them in the future. O'Brien, Sr. asked Penney to overlay the displayed field with what the STEAP grant will do. Penney said the

STEAP grant will involve creating seven trenches for the methane venting. The trenches will be longitudinal to the goal lines. At the end of each trench there will be a vertical vent sitting on top of the pipe with a propeller to remove the methane. These will be outside the limits of the field where we are getting into the 3-1 slope. Conant asked if we are ready to go out to bid for the STEAP grant? Elsesser said we are waiting for the Attorney General's office. The methane is well below the field and will naturally flow into the trenches. Anchor Engineering found the issue of the methane leaching. Elsesser said the field never had the adequate topsoil that was called for. In the end, this will be a much better field than before. Conant asked the timeframe of the construction? Elsesser said the construction will be quick with the stripping off of the topsoil to reach suitable materials, the placement of the trench pipes, reaching the landfill cap, filling back in, and then grading off the whole area. How the grading is done depends on the use for the field. The southwestern corner is not as level as the rest of the area. This will be leveled off and fill is available at the treatment plant. We hope this will be completed by October if the grass grows in, otherwise it will be next spring. Penney said it is going to take a month for the bidding portion and Elsesser said we are pushing to get the bid document out. This grant was awarded in November but STEAP does not run with the fiscal year and does not have an end date. Right now STEAP grants are being held hostage. Thomas asked about Elsesser's statement on the grading depends upon the sport you are grading for. Elsesser said the Council has to decide what you are going to have here. A football field has a bit of a slope. Penney said softball fields have home plate at the low point and the pitcher's mound at the high point that then slopes down. So you cannot have grading for both sports. In the concept plans with using the field for both sports Penney has held to the football grade. It is not an ideal layout for a softball field but it would be within certain parameters. Most people will not notice the grade. The mound would be placed at the high point. The football grading would be at 1.5% down the length of the field and that tends to be lost over the years with the raking of the field.

Penney presented the softball field layout if the DPW lay down yard location is chosen. A soil scientist has not delineated the wetlands. This area is used by DPW for the storage of materials. The piles of materials come and go. Williams said all of the material there will have to go somewhere. Elsesser said we do not have any other space. Penney said we have a space that is half the size of this yard near the Town Garage. Elsesser said we would have to spend \$40k to remove trees for this material to be moved or we have to pay to get rid of some of the materials. O'Brien, Sr. asked what the drop off is at this site from the level of Plains Road? Penney said it is an 8' – 12' difference.

The direction Penney was given back in December/January was to look at these two sites for softball with the concept of removing football from the former landfill. The parking area has 86 spaces at the football field site. The DPW site does not have any parking although Penney is trying to add in a parking area. The DPW site has wetlands regulations to consider. Storm water management would be added in. Penney does not think we would have a problem getting wetlands approval. The plan

would limit the amount of grading towards the wetlands. Williams said there is a lot of standing water there. Penney said it is a large wetlands complex and takes up much of the area. There is form and function to the complex with flood control, nutrient allocation, and storm water quality. Elsesser said the water depth at South Street Ext. is probably 3' deep but he does not believe the gravel pit has ever flooded. Last week there was standing water there but there is a wall of materials there now. Penney said he thinks the puddling is from the piles of organic material. That pit is not graded to an even grade. Elsesser said we have sunk some equipment there that had to be towed out. IWA approval takes at least 60 days. Either of these sites would have to have a soil scientist survey it.

Cost estimates from February 2021 were shown to compare both concepts. Elsesser said a question was raised about making one field smaller and not have a fence in order to be overlaid on the football field. Penney said this question was taken to Anchor Engineering and without the fence we could maintain football concurrently with softball. The infield and bases are still at 60' while the limit of the outfield is changed. These were shifted to the south to hold the back goal line; the first base line would coincide with the goal line. Fill would be needed to hold the grading in this scenario. Hand asked what football would do for a practice field in the scenario. Elsesser said this is a 180 degree change to allow for a multi-purpose field. Until a week ago we did not know there was anything active for football. Elsesser continued saying we still do not know how many Coventry players are signed up versus those from the six other towns. We have been working on these plans for 1.5 years. We were told at the start that football did not exist and it would not come back. We need more information if that has changed.

Penney said we applied the same application for the DPW lay down field. This would reduce the wetlands impact. The plan holds the first base line and shifts the third base line. Penney believes the field fits better because you do not need the retaining wall and it helps with the grading. Penney worked on an alternative plan for the parking that shows perpendicular parking on both sides to increase parking on Plains Road. There are about 40 formal spaces and some informal ones. When Anchor Engineering did the estimate they had the basic field, an irrigation system, and a sidewalk. This was keeping it to bare bones. The cost estimates are being modified to reflect the 180' field for both locations and the change to the fencing. Penney thinks in this bid climate the estimates are going to be higher than the numbers from January.

Thomas said football has a practice field and a playing field. Where are these with the multi-sport plan? Penney said the game field is where the 180' softball field is placed. Thomas asked how often seeding and reseeding over the field would be needed? Elsesser said we did not know about a football program until recently so we are not prepared to talk specifics on that. Thomas said she is hearing that football in town will be cancelled if the multi-sport plan is chosen. Thomas continued saying the Softball Committee was given three locations to evaluate. Elsesser said there were more than that. Thomas said the Committee was misled with the sewer treatment

plant. Thomas asked when the multi-sport field would be changed over from grass to dirt? Penney said on professional fields when baseball stops playing the field is turfed for football. We would not do that here; the field would remain dirt. The 205' softball field eats up the practice field. Thomas said there would be an overlap in the sports seasons. Elsesser said there is not a lot of room for the multi-sport concept. His opinion is that the two cannot co-exist. Thomas asked if the materials from the DPW yard can be moved to the sewer treatment plant. Elsesser said it is possible but we would have to pay to gain access to that site. Penney said the DPW does not have any space to store at the garage. There is currently wooded space and the number to prepare the space is not known. It is at least \$40k.

Hand asked if the lay down yard is completely full? Elsesser said it recently got a lot of material and it is mostly full. We are worried about equipment sinking in at the gravel pit.

Williams asked if Pop Warner is pay for play or aau? Coach Moore said it is pay for play. The average subscriber pays \$180 for football and \$125 for cheer. Williams asked what the total number of parking spaces would be at the gravel pit. Elsesser added the parking issue is unresolved. Penney said he could get that information to the Council in a few days.

A brief recess was called by Blanchard at 9:58 p.m.
The meeting resumed at 10:03 p.m.

The Softball Committee made informed and thoughtful decisions after viewing numerous locations and conducting discussions. The Committee has recommended the DPW lay down yard. They are confident this is the best location to secure safe and equitable fields for girls' softball. The facility needed for football and softball are too different. Having a specific location for girls will bring equality. The site cost differences are about \$100k. The final decision will be made by the Council. The Committee stands ready to move forward with their Step 2 charge.

Coach Moore said August 1 is official start date for football conditioning at five days per week. When school starts we go to three days. Elsesser said we have to learn about the Pop Warner program, such as, is it all-inclusive, we need to know about the skills and abilities, and the liability of the town. Coach added it is the only football program that offers a scholarship. Pop Warner is top notch and is the biggest football program.

9. Miscellaneous/Correspondence:

9.A. * Board Of Education: 6/10/21 Minutes; 6/24/2021 Agenda

O'Brien, Sr. did not discuss anything about these items.

9.B. * Town Of Chaplin – Resolution In Support Of Home Rule In Municipal Zoning Decision-Making

O'Brien, Jr. asked if this still relevant as the State took action already? Elsesser said the State passed a significant change. Rich Roberts, one of our Town Attorneys, did a presentation on zoning that we will be getting the PowerPoint of. This is somewhat moot now in taking action. Home rule only entitles a town to do what the state authorizes us to do. Other states you can do that which the state does not prohibit you from doing. The State could vote tomorrow to dissolve the town.

10. Executive Session

Motion: I move that the Town Council enter into Executive Session pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(E)-discussion of any matter which would result in the disclosure of public records or the information therein contained described in sub-section (b) of Section 1-210 with the following people in attendance - the seven members of the Town Council and John Elsesser, Town Manager.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: O'Brien, Jr.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

The Council entered Executive Session at 11:12 p.m.

Motion: I move that the Council exit Executive Session at 11:29 p.m.

By: O'Brien, Jr.

Seconded: O'Brien, Sr.

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

Against: None

Abstain: None

12. Adjournment:

Motion: I move that the Council adjourn at 11:30 p.m.

By: O'Brien, Sr.

Seconded: Conant

Voting:

For: O'Brien, Sr., O'Brien, Jr., Hand, Blanchard, Williams, Conant, Thomas

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.

My name is David Moore, and I am the president of the Northeast Panthers football and cheer. I've been coaching football here in CT since 2015. I had the privilege of coaching at Miller-Richardson field until it was deemed unsafe. Since then, I've been coaching in neighboring towns. Over the last year and a half I've been working with both the Coventry and EO Smith's head coaches on bringing back youth football and cheer to our community. Both coaches have made a commitment to being members of our board. We all agree on the importance of having a feeder program for our high schools. It is extremely beneficial to our student athletes to prepare them at the youth level for our high school football and cheer programs. We have decided to join the Southern CT Pop Warner organization. Pop Warner is the oldest and largest non-profit football and cheer organization in America. Pop Warner offers many amazing opportunities and benefits for athletes that the smaller organizations do not. I've printed off some of the benefits that Pop Warner offers for you to review after this meeting.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

my name is Addison Byam I live at 4013 south st. I'm going into 5th grade and I love playing softball for Coventry. But one thing I need to say is " our fields matter too". I currently play on a newly formed travel team in town and All stars for our town. We just finished playing recreational softball for the season. So now you can imagine how many days a week I am on our softball field.

Last week their was a meeting with a idea to use the football field as the new softball fields. How is it that you think that is fair? Football players and cheerleaders deserve to have their own fields for their league. Our town deserves to have football and cheerleading as well. Every athlete in our town deserves a fair chance to play on good fields.

I love my sport, and my parents love to watch me play my sport. this is about what is fair for us and what we deserve. It is also about what the football league deserves too.

Please consider building new soft ball field's for us girls who work really hard . It is very unfair that we have no batting cages, press box, snack shack, or a place to have signs up. We don't even have electricity at the middle school fields where we play. This is just

Good evening members of the Town Council
My name is Beverly Carlson

I have lived in Coventry for most of my 67 year life. I have owned property here for 41 years. Fifteen months ago I spoke at a town meeting in support for funding and construction of a proper girls softball field in our town. Well, here I am again.

While growing up in Coventry, there were NO Girl Sports! NONE. But of course there were boy sports and leagues. I thought this was unjust, not fair. So through effort and petitions, while attending Coventry High School my junior year in 1971, I helped create the **FIRST** women softball team at the high school and I was the first co-captain. **The following year, the U.S. Congress signed into law Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, which created an affirmative duty for public actors to provide equal resources to male and female athletes.**

It is now 50 years later, I repeat **50 years**, and as a town, we have not fully recognized the importance of supporting girls sports. By failing to provide equal resources to our female athletes, we send a message to every family in the state that Coventry is a town that is stuck in 1971. This volunteer softball committee has been working tirelessly to get their own location for a field or two for the 130 plus girls who play softball in Coventry. Our failure to come to an agreement, tells these 130 girls that their needs can only be met if doing so is convenient for boys. This is pitiful and shortsighted for our community.

By virtue of your participation on this committee, I suspect that every person here understands the benefit of organized sport for the development of our youth ...it promotes self esteem, fitness, team sportsmanship, a sense of belonging as well as so much more. **Perhaps more important than all, sports are a powerful equalizing force...** when an athlete steps onto a field, it does not matter where they come from, what they look like, or what gender they are. All that matters is how well they play, when given the resources to do so.

The **REAL** message I want to share with you today does not come directly from me, but rather comes via my daughter, Ada Peters, Class president of Coventry High School's 2012 class. Ada happens to be an athlete and participated in our youth sport programs in Coventry. It has shaped her character in so many ways.

Less than ten years ago the decision was made to remove a recreational softball field at Laidlaw Park without input from the Softball program. In November 2016 our softball community began work with the goal of constructing fields for the young female athletes in Coventry to have fields of their own. These athletes need a place that provides equal opportunities other sports have for sponsorships, concessions, and community building.

It appears that history is trying to repeat itself, this time with a plan to repurpose the existing football field to accommodate softball. This time the affected sport, football, is aware of this. For a fraction of the proposed cost of the fields we could be playing at Laidlaw Park today, but the softball field was eliminated in favor of soccer fields. Now we are, again, putting one sport ahead of another. There is another viable option, the gravel pit, which was the Softball Committee's recommended location in both September of 2019 and November of 2020.

The football field is just that: a football field. It will be ready to play for the planned fall season. Why would we take a nearly completed field away from one sport to give it to a different one again?

Sharing the space between the two sports isn't a functionally viable option. Our seasons overlap, and our games are played on the same days. Further, the goal posts for football would have to be moved in and out. The field at the High School doesn't allow youth football organizations to use it, as the extra foot traffic destroys the grass, which is another reason football and softball do not make for good field partners.

Please consider the thought, time, and effort the Softball Committee has devoted to the pre-planning for these fields and their strong recommendation for the gravel pit location. The committee is made up of citizens of this community that the Town Council appointed three years ago. The charge of the committee was to identify the need and make a recommendation of the best location for the Softball organization and the community as a whole. Disregarding the Committee's recommendation and taking a field from another active sport reinforces the precedent of fields being repurposed without input from the people affected by these decisions, and we hope that history will not repeat itself in this case. Thank you for your time and consideration.

While driving her back to Northeastern Saturday, where she is currently attending graduate law school, she asked me what I was doing this week. I mentioned I was asked to talk to you, the town counsel about supporting a girls softball field. After I shared with her some of my thoughts, she said:

“Mom, you need to also talk about what this lack of support for equal playing fields is teaching the boys.

If the town cannot show respect to the female athletes by providing a much-needed field of their own, then, in the back of their heads, young boys will grow up thinking that they are entitled to more than girls. This mindset will carry-over into the classroom, into the home, and to the professional world and it perpetuates the old belief that girls are “inferior or second rate to boys” and do not need equal support from the town. Yet girls make up 50% of our youth and must benefit from 50% of our town’s resources. The best way to break this old belief is to reinforce notions of equality to our youth.

When our kids are happy, we as parents are happy and this makes for an attractive community where people want to live. Just as the Farmers Market, our lake and our parks have made Coventry a more progressive and desirable place to live.

The solution is not to take a space that is already designated for another sport or to make them share a space with another sport when there is another viable option that has been recommended by the very committee appointed by you, the town council in 2018. I urge you to follow the Softball Committee’s recommendation and vote for the gravel pit to be the official location of a greatly needed girls softball field.

This is 2021 and the world is changing. So must our town.

Thank you,

BENEFITS OF POP WARNER

Here are a few of the many reasons you should join Pop Warner:

- **NO TRYOUTS!** – Pop Warner programs have no tryouts or cutting of rosters!
- **Programs in Several States & Countries** – Pop Warner has active programs in several states and countries around the world.
- **More than just athletes!** – Pop Warner is the only national youth sports organization in America that requires its participants to perform adequately in the classroom before permitting them to play.
- **Little Scholars Program** – Pop Warner is the only national youth sports organization in America that rewards its members for their outstanding performance in the classroom.
- **Stability** – Pop Warner is the oldest national youth football and cheerleading organization in the world. Founded in 1929 by Joe Tomlin, we now have over 120 leagues and over 325,000 members.
- **It's Inexpensive** – Signing up for Pop Warner Football, Cheerleading or Dance is inexpensive. A typical registration fee for each participant ranges on average from about \$175 to \$200 for the season. *Registration fees are set by each local program.
- **Pop Warner National Championships** – Each year, Pop Warner hosts the Pop Warner Super Bowl and National Cheer and Dance Championships. More than 500 cheer and dance squads and 72 football teams compete for the right to be crowned Pop Warner National Champion.
- **National Scholar Banquet** – Pop Warner hosts an awards program each year to celebrate the accomplishments of our participants. Nationally, we select First Team, Second Team and Honorable Mention All-American Scholars.

- **College Scholarships** - Each year, we award scholarships for higher education to the most deserving students in our highest grade levels. Pop Warner is proud to have awarded over \$1.35M in scholarships since 1993!
- **Mandatory Play Requirements** – Everyone participates under mandatory rules of play, so every child is guaranteed to play.
- **Team Structure** – Leagues have options with how to structure their program. While leagues can continue the current structure where a player is placed in a division based on his or her age and weight they may also instead choose to register players based on age only. Currently, an estimated 75-80% of youth football nationally follows an age-only structure.
- **Volunteers & Coaches** – We have over 40,000 volunteers and coaches that are being trained every year to offer the best and safest programs for you and your children.
- **It all starts here** – The National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) estimates that between 60% and 70% of all NFL players began their careers playing Pop Warner Football.
- **Background Checks** – Pop Warner programs nationwide are required to annually conduct a background check of Coaches, Board of Directors members and any other persons, volunteers or hired workers, who provide regular service to the league and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players and/or spirit participants. The purpose of these background checks is, first and foremost, to protect the children.
- **Concussion Prevention & Awareness** – In addition to its more stringent return to play concussion rules, Pop Warner took the lead in youth sports by creating a Medical Advisory Board. The Board was created to ensure Pop Warner remains proactive on all medical issues that affect youth sports, particularly football and cheerleading, with a primary focus on prevention and proper identification and treatment of concussions, hydration awareness, proper nutrition guidelines, and general health and safety issues.
- **Coaching Education Programs** – The safety of our athletes is always the top priority and that is why we provide extensive training for all our football and cheer & dance coaches.

- **National Rule Book** – Each Pop Warner Region, League and Association receive free National rule books for their organizations.

- **Administrative Manual** – Each Pop Warner Region, League and Association receive free National Administrative Manuals, designed to keep each League and Association current on all administrative matters, as well as to facilitate the daily operational management of those local organizations.

- **Coaches and Adult Codes of Conduct** – All coaches, football and spirit participants must abide by a Code of Conduct which includes several provisions. If any of these rules are broken, the League shall have the authority to impose a penalty.

- **Free Online Roster Program** – Pop Warner offers a free online roster program to all of our members to roster their participants easily and effectively.

- **National Grants Program** – For several years, Pop Warner and its national partners & sponsors have awarded thousands of dollars in national grants for teams and programs including start-up grants, national championship travel grants, equipment grants and more!

- **We surround ourselves with the best** – Pop Warner is proud to have numerous outstanding sponsors, licensees, fundraiser's and partners who offer several amazing opportunities to our programs.

- **FREE HELP and DISCOUNTS** – Pop Warner sponsors and partners such as Under Armour, Team Cheer, Shock Doctor and Cutters offer free equipment and uniform merchandise as part of a grant program for new organizations as well as those in financial need. Pop Warner partners also offer Pop Warner only discounts and rebates on merchandise such as footballs, cheer and dance apparel, fundraising items.

- **Competitive and Affordable Insurance** – Pop Warner offers low-cost, broad insurance coverage as a benefit to its members. The Plan is specifically written to meet the needs of Pop Warner Little Scholars. The Pop Warner Insurance Committee, in conjunction with its Broker, periodically reviews the cyclical insurance marketplace to obtain the broadest possible coverage at the most competitive price.
Find your local program and sign up today!