Minutes
Coventry Town Council Special Meeting
July 22, 2019
Town Hall Annex

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
   Present: Joan Lewis, Jonathan Hand, Mike Sobol, Julie Blanchard, Matthew O’Brien, Lisa Conant, Carolyn Arabolos
   Also present: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Amanda Backhaus, Finance Director

2. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Audience of Citizens: None.

4. Acceptance of Minutes:
   Motion #19/20-7: Lisa Conant moved to accept the minutes of the special Town Council meeting on July 8, 2019, seconded by Matthew O’Brien. The following corrections were requested:
   a. Page 2, item 8.B., bottom of page: Indicate that Carolyn Arabolos asked whether there is any risk or liability to the Town, and that Mr. Reiser said no.
   b. Page 3, first paragraph, second line: revise second sentence to read, “Matthew O’Brien asked if there are any requirements for companies to negotiate with us for the agreement.”

   The motion to accept the minutes as corrected carried on unanimous vote.

5. Consent Agenda:
   Motion #19/20-8: Lisa Conant moved to accept the Consent Agenda, seconded by Jonathan Hand. Mike Sobol requested to remove item 6. E.3., Eversource Library event sponsorship. The motion to accept the Consent Agenda as amended carried on unanimous vote.

6. Reports:
   A. Council Chairwoman – Joan Lewis: No report.

   B. Council Members:
   Jonathan Hand said he was honored to attend a ribbon cutting ceremony at Pizza on Main restaurant recently. He looks forward to continuing to welcome them to town.

   Carolyn Arabolos noted that the Finance Committee report was inadvertently left off of the agenda, so she is providing an update under Council member reports. The Finance Committee met two weeks ago and reviewed the end of year reports. The 60-day rule means that July and August accounting will factor into this year. We did not collect as much as we billed, but we collected enough to cover expenditures and the additional appropriations that we made. Fund balance is expected to remain flat or have a slight decrease. We also saw a decrease with COVRA - revenues are on track but there was an increase in expenditures. This is the first year that the fund has lost money in some time. We are ok this year but it warrants watching. A tax Sale is planned for September. Revaluation is underway. The RFP for banking services is in final review. We are planning for the auditors on 7/24-26 and they will be on site in October. We reviewed the Moody’s issuer comment report – it is very positive overall. The Town has a lot of good strengths. The report reaffirms the need to increase fund balance. We also discussed that we are still using a 7.1% assumption for pension. The Pension Committee doesn’t want to change it. John Elsesser corrected this to 7.5%. Matthew O’Brien asked why it takes two full weeks to get
minutes of these meetings. We used to get them sooner. John Elsesser said there have been too many meetings.

8. New Business:
B. 19/20-2: Softball Field Study Committee Report:
Motion #19/20-9: Matthew O’Brien made a motion to move up item 8.B, Softball Field Study Committee Report, as the next item of business. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant and carried on unanimous vote.

Jennifer Rodgers, Ashley Gagnon, Bonnie Edmondson, and Mike Blouin were present from the Softball Field Study Committee. The committee introduced Coventry resident Caroline Wesoloskie, an athlete who has been playing softball in town for several years. Caroline, age 13, thanked the committee for working to improve softball facilities in town, and read an essay she wrote about the need for improved girls’ softball fields when she was 8 years old. (attached to minutes). Caroline feels that the girls’ softball fields are not comparable to the boys’ fields and that the boys get more support. She believes this is an urgent problem that needs immediate attention, and that she is not the only one who feels this way.

Bonnie Edmondson gave background on the identified need and establishment of the Softball Field Study Committee. She thanked the Town Council for taking action to establish a structure to address these concerns, and shared an interim report of the committee’s findings.

The report identifies safety and access issues and points out inequity in access to fields. There are no fields available for softball. Coventry Youth Softball currently uses the Board of Education fields but those have limited access. Those fields were not playable this spring due to wet weather issues and the need for drainage work. In contrast there are three well-groomed fields for baseball, and concessions and advertising which softball cannot do. A comparison is outlined in appendix 1.

National and local trends were shared that show participation in girls’ fast pitch softball is increasing. There are no facilities in town adequate to meet the needs. Despite these challenges, the high school team was successful this year but that is not sustainable.

Possible solutions include 3 identified locations:
- The property neighboring Miller Richardson field. The Town Manager is currently inquiring about this site. A concept plan was developed by the Town Engineer. This could potentially allow for use of some existing infrastructure and appears to be shovel ready. The committee is optimistic about this option and awaits additional information. It would be the committee’s first choice should it become available.
- The gravel pit. Though feasible it poses some challenges including relocation of the pit, debris and the transfer station.
- The football field at the landfill. This also poses challenges, including frequent monitoring of methane gas which could be costly, possible public relations challenges, access to water and restrooms, and costs for additional fill.

The committee made the following recommendations:
- Short term repair and renovation to the ball fields at CNHMS. The drainage issue needs to be executed as soon as possible.
- Move forward with negotiations to acquire the property adjacent to Miller Richardson field. This would address inequity and safety issues.
Joan Lewis thanked the committee for their work and noted that this matter will be referred to the Town Council Finance Committee, since most of the issues seem to be financial related. She opened the discussion to questions from other Council members.

Lisa Conant asked the committee to talk a little bit more about Title IX exposure due to inequities. Bonnie said her understanding of Title IX is schools that receive educational funding are bound by Title IX, but this is a town. It is more of a gender inequity issue in the spirit of Title IX. Marie Gallo Hall, an attorney and member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, noted that, “In the spirit of Title IX” doesn’t technically apply here.

Mike Sobol said that the committee did a great job and the report is fantastic. There is clearly a need and he looks forward to understanding the costs. Hopefully we can get something adequately drained and groomed for next season. Jonathan Hand thanked the committee for the hard work done to develop this cohesive document. Mike said it speaks to citizens identifying a problem and change that needs to happen – and that this is how change happens. Hopefully other groups in town who want to see things change will see this happen. Ashley Gagnon said she has two stepdaughters who play softball and she would like to see a good investment in providing fields and equity for female players. Mike said that there is good news on part of the issues identified in the report - maintenance of the two middle school fields is scheduled for mid-August once play wraps up on the fields.

John Elsesser said he will forward the report to facility maintenance for some of the safety issues. Regarding the land acquisition issue, there has been some dialogue. There are several owners and they need to discuss it among themselves. We are waiting to hear back from them. Regarding the transfer station - where we’d like to relocate, the person who owns that land owes us money and we would like to do a land exchange, but that is not going anywhere at the present time. We can look at other options beyond what the committee has identified. WPCA has land across from that facility that we don’t have access to – it is not shovel ready but might serve as a new site for the gravel pit and transfer station. We have to keep several options in motion and figure out a better way to keep clear lines of communication regarding schedules for play so we can be ready with maintenance needs. Joan said we will schedule this matter for a future Finance Committee meeting when options firm up. Carolyn Arabolos expressed her thanks to the committee, saying she is impressed with level of detail provided in a short amount of time.

6. Reports, Continued:
   C. Steering Committee – Jonathan Hand: Jonathan reported that the Steering Committee continues to review the Town’s personnel rules document. Due to the volume of information, the document will be divided up for review over the next several meetings. The goal would be to act on it at the November 4th Town Council meeting. The committee also is making several recommendations for appointments to Boards and Commissions tonight. Consideration of a candidate interested in serving as an alternate to the Planning & Commission was tabled until an interview can be scheduled.

Motion #19/20-10: Jonathan Hand moved to appoint Mark Messier to the Cemetery Commission, term to expire 10/17/2021. The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien and carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #19/20-11: Jonathan Hand moved to appoint Cameron Croucht to the Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Committee, term to expire 3/1/2021. The motion was seconded by Matthew O’Brien and carried on unanimous vote.
E. COVRRRA – John Elsesser: John reported that the scale broke at the transfer station. We are not surprised, because we knew a lot of things at the transfer station are wearing out. The scale was welded once before, and is probably not repairable this time. We are recommending purchase of a new scale that could be moved if we relocate. This purchase would include the scale, rails, site prep and electrical work. **Motion #19/20-12:** Carolyn Arabolos moved that COVRRRA authorize an expense not to exceed $30,000 for the purchase and installation of a new scale for the transfer station. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand.

John Elsesser said we are losing money right now and the installation will take about 6 weeks. We are charging the minimum fee which is costing thousands per week. We would like to use Mansfield’s fee schedule which is based on estimated volume. We don’t want to do that long-term because it causes problems, but we think we need to take an interim step. Mike Sobol asked if this comes from the $200,000 held in reserve for the transfer station. John replied it comes from the general fund. If the station is not relocated those funds can be released. We are trying to keep expenditures to a minimum. Matthew O’Brien noted we will also will be receiving $40,000 from the courts. Amanda Backhaus noted that we also have $300,000 above the $200,000 that was set aside for the transfer station. Carolyn asked to clarify that the electrical work costs were not included in the quote. John said that is correct and the concrete work was also not included. We will do some of the work ourselves but electrical work must be done by a contractor. Matthew said it seems that Mike is talking about this cost being part of the relocation expense. Carolyn said she concerned whether the estimate is enough. John replied that we’ll make it work. We are recommending we take it out of unallocated COVRRRA fund balance, but keep in mind it could reduce the $200,000 or be kept in mind when looking at that expense. Carolyn asked how quickly action will be taken if we approve this tonight. John replied we would order it tomorrow. **Motion #19/20-12 carried on unanimous vote.**

Motion #19/20-13: Carolyn Arabolos moved to approve the interim fee schedule for the transfer station until the new scale is installed. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.

F. Town Manager – John Elsesser:
John provided highlights from his project memo. The Police radios are operational and seem to be working well. The new Chevy Tahoe is in service. We will bring it to a Council meeting for display.

John was invited to the Northeast Leadership event at the White House in Washington, D.C. It was a long day but there were some key developments. The Undersecretary to HUD was there and John asked him about crumbling foundations. The Undersecretary then went on to talk about it in his presentation and it is clear they are well aware of the issue, and now we have a list of primary contacts at all of the federal agencies. John learned a lot about opportunity zones which will be great statewide for development, even if not specific to Coventry. It was good to see the knowledge level of federal staff. Carolyn Arabolos asked if other leaders from Connecticut attended. John replied there were about eight, including Rob Simmons, and officials from Willington and Stafford. There were a few more from Connecticut because there were congressional meetings the next day. CRCOG did an infographic which shows the rising numbers. They were a little surprised by that.

We continue to work toward the microgrid project. Last week the Board of Education was awarded two small ZRec grants for solar carports and the Housing Authority was awarded a similar sized one for Orchard Hills. Orchard Hills had a meeting tonight and authorized submission. It will be a considerable savings for seniors. Whether the microgrid goes ahead or not
the solar can proceed. The Board of Education is deciding on the solar component at their meeting Thursday night. Both Encon and the ECG microgrid people will be there to discuss ways for the projects to combine. Encon would be submitting their virtual net metering proposal on Friday if the Board of Education approves. Joan Lewis asked if the Board’s approval would allow the microgrid to go forward. John said yes. The only interaction between the new solar and the microgrid would be to charge the batteries. It is complicated and we are dealing with one element at a time. The deposits for the solar are not extreme so it wouldn’t be the end of the world if we decide to walk away. The big component is the microgrid contract from CT DEEP. We have been inquiring and were assured it would be this week. There are some concerns about the rates for the power purchase agreement, but the use of natural gas will go up which will eliminate the pipeline charges. The project will also generate waste heat and reduce demand charges. We are not saying the power purchase agreement won’t be comparable but it is only one element. Waste heat can also generate cold air in the summer. It is very complicated but they are getting their hands around it. We are hoping for a presentation at August 5th meeting. It’s hard when there are so many moving parts but if you want to go to the Board of Education meeting Thursday night that will be the first overview of all of the elements. Joan said she appreciates all the effort that John is putting in to get this $4 million grant in place. John noted that another benefit is that we might not need to replace the aging generators.

The Library LED lighting project was approved. We anticipate an imminent decision for the High School/Middle School projects. The waste water treatment plant project was also approved.

John went to the State Library Board meeting today and they are willing to modify our grant, lower it to $850,000 for renovations and give us until 2020. It has to be matched the same amount. We don’t have the cost of the project but on August 5th we may also have the Library committee here to give an update. Lisa Conant asked if the library will be fundraising for their part of the match. John said we were asked that by the Library Board. We can certainly look into it.

Daly Road chip seal is scheduled for the week of July 29th. The catch basin prep work is being done by town crews. Eastview and Lewis Hill are also being prepped for cold-in-place recycling. There is a lot of information about road work and a meeting with CT Water Company in the report. We are meeting to talk about getting our water tower which could lower insurance rates in the Village. Cumberland Farms is looking at an early September construction start date. For the Facebook world, to correct some misinformation going around, the Town never owned the boat launch. It was deeded by Elmore Turkington in the 1950s. Regarding Patriots Park we accepted a federal grant that put some requirements on it which were later superseded by a legal decision that says any public park is public and must be open to all. At Liscie, beach parking only is restricted due to swimming lessons. Joan Lewis said we were fortunate to get money to purchase Patriots Park. John replied that without that purchase, that property would be condominiums. That is what happened in East Hampton and their lake has a lot of environmental issues because of runoff.

2. Hydrilla treatment plan: The treatment was done at Coventry Lake on Thursday and went fine. They didn’t do the Fanwort treatment at Eagleville Lake because the State didn’t get the permit yet. The timing for Fanwort is not as critical so they will do it when they get the permit. Lisa Conant asked when the next Hydrilla treatment will be done. John said that he asked and didn’t get a date yet.

3. Eversource – support for Library mini-golf event: Mike Sobol removed this item from the Consent Agenda and asked John Elsesser to speak about it. John said that the Library Board of
Trustees is trying to figure out ways to raise funds. They are having an indoor mini golf event that is designed to generate revenue. They are not able to hold the annual book sale due to space and storage limitations. This event will help support other programs. They are still looking for some hole sponsors. Eversource will be the title sponsor.

7. Unfinished Business:
A. 18/19-88: Consideration/Possible Action: Augmented Reality Advertising Agreement: John Elsesser gave background on this proposal to contract with a company to manage future potential revenue from augmented reality advertising. He said the technology is just emerging and this is really a, "is there a need - is there a downside or not" consideration. The only downside would be if a better company comes along. The vendor believes the only way towns are going to get control of this will be to work together. His firm is the only company doing it right now. There is a 30-day clause in the proposed contract. John recommends doing it. Jonathan Hand said he also believes there is minimal risk in entering into this agreement. The only benefit would be if towns band together. While we won't see any immediate revenue from it he would like to see towns maintain control over this type of advertising in the future. Carolyn Arabolos agreed.
Matthew O'Brien said he doesn't have a problem with entering into an agreement but there are some changes we should probably make to the proposed agreement. John suggested referring Council member comments to the Town Attorney and asked that any comments be emailed to John by Thursday. Motion #19/20-14: Carolyn moved to table consideration of this matter to the August 5, 2019 meeting. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.

8. New Business:
A. 19/20-1: Consideration/Possible Action: CHS Walls Committee, Supplemental Appropriation up to $43,200 for Walls Testing:
John Elsesser said we received a letter from the chair of the CHS Walls Committee. The testing is reasonably priced but engineering costs are expensive. The only additional thing is that (School Facilities Director) Bill Trudelle has asked for money for staff overtime to move things around. We said no. We feel that should be a Board of Education responsibility. The CNREF has $348,000 available. Matthew O'Brien noted that this problem came up 4 years ago - is there any reason why the Board of Education can't use some of their surplus funds to pay part of this bill? Why are we paying for everything when the money is available? Carolyn Arabolos said she agrees with Matt and asked how we approach that. John replied that requires a discussion between the two agencies. Joan Lewis agreed. Matthew said he has no problem with the expenditure, just the source of the funding. Jonathan Hand noted that he is the Council representative to this committee and he thinks it's important to make sure they have the funds in place to get this done as soon as possible. He is worried given the time constraint that the work won't get done if we only have half of the money. Then we are wasting time and are already into the school year. Matthew said he appreciates the urgency and is willing to come to a special meeting to allocate funding if necessary. Joan said she will make the contact with the Board of Education Chair to try and add this matter to their agenda for the Thursday meeting. Jonathan said he is not sure how many weeks we have to go in the schedule. Mike Sobol said that the Board can fully fund it at their meeting on Thursday. Joan said we can call a special Council meeting next Monday if we need to.

C. 19/20-3: Consideration/Possible Action: Lease Purchase Financing Agreement For Large Dump Truck, Public Works Radio System and Roadside Mower: John Elsesser noted that this is needed in order to complete the grant for the dump truck. Motion #19/20-15: Jonathan Hand moved to authorize the resolution as presented and to authorize the Town Manager to execute. Carolyn Arabolos seconded the motion. Mike Sobol asked for details about the
roadside mower. John Elsesser replied that it is a tractor and mower unit with a replaceable head for finer mowing. Matthew O’Brien asked about the source of the funding. Amanda Backhaus replied that it is paid out of CNREF and then paid back in. There is zero impact on the fund. Motion #19/20-15 carried on unanimous vote.

9. Executive Session:
Motion #19/20-16: Matthew O’Brien moved that the Town Council enter into Executive Session at 9:04 PM 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: Town Council members, the Town Manager and the Finance Director. The motion was seconded by Julie Blanchard and carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #19/20-17: Matthew O’Brien moved to leave Executive Session at 9:22 PM. The motion was seconded by Carolyn Arabolos and carried on unanimous vote.

10. Adjournment:
Motion #19/20-18: Matthew O’Brien moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 PM. The motion was seconded by Carolyn Arabolos and carried on unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone
Town Council Clerk

Note: These minutes are not official until acted upon by the Town Council at its next regular meeting. Those meeting minutes will reflect approval or changes to these minutes.
Pre-Opinion

Introduction
Attention Coventry town council, US softball girls feel strongly that the boys' baseball is getting more support than girls softball. From the fields to the equipment to the uniforms, we feel it is unfair. This urgent problem needs immediate attention.

Fields
We feel the fields are unfair! You may not realize the difference between Millbird Richardson and our fields, but we surely do. The boys' baseball fields are well-mowed and are all raked out, but ours on the other hand, have a rock-hard field with long, ichy grass full of dandelions and bees. Our fields are also rock hard like they have never been raked and we have blades of grass growing in the infield. These fields should never be in such poor conditions.

Conclusion
Though our softball is not very well run, the good part is it is still fun, but this urgent problem needs immediate attention! Please. This is why US softball girls feel strongly about this problem. Thank you! PS, there is a free invite to any of our softball games!
RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Town of Coventry wishes to purchase a large fully equipped dump truck at a cost of $205,000, a roadside mower at a cost of $130,000, and upgrade the public works radio system at the cost of $85,000; and

WHEREAS, the Town plans to purchase these items currently with $50,000 of grant proceeds and $370,000 of funds from the Town’s non-recurring capital expenditure fund; and

WHEREAS, in order to replenish said non-recurring capital expenditure fund the Town intends to enter into a lease purchase financing agreement with a recognized lending company at a date in the near future; and

WHEREAS, a lease purchase financing agreement will allow the Town to immediately obtain and utilize these vehicles and equipment for the benefit of Town residents, allow the Town to pay for said items over time, with first annual installment to be paid through the Town’s debt service, and further allow the Town to reimburse its non-recurring capital fund for other possible uses for the benefit of the Town; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has determined that a lease purchase financing agreement of this nature is in the best interests of the Town of Coventry.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

Town Manager, John A. Elsesser, is hereby authorized to negotiate and execute all documents necessary for the purchase of said items from funds contained within the non-recurring capital fund; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:
Town Manager, John A Elsesser, is hereby authorized to negotiate and execute a lease purchase financing agreement with a recognized and responsible lending company under such terms as he views favorable to the Town in order to effectuate the intent of this resolution and which meets the requirements of United States Treasury Regulation Section 1.150-2; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

Upon the execution of said lease purchasing financing agreement and the receipt of funds from such financing agreement, the Town Manager or Finance Director shall use such funds to reimburse the non-recurring capital fund for the expenditure of the above referenced items.