Minutes  
Coventry Town Council Meeting  
August 19, 2019  
Town Hall Annex

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

2. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Audience of Citizens:

   Marjorie Roach, 348 Lewis Hill Road, is the Democratic certified Registrar of Voters. She spoke to publicly correct an article that appeared in the Journal Inquirer on August 16, 2019. According to Marjorie, the article said the Republican Registrar, Pamela Sewell, is not certified and also stated that Marjorie Roach is not certified. She called the State immediately because she was upset. She showed a copy of her certification. On 4/15/19 she had to take the certified moderator training which is the second step toward certification. She also showed a copy of that. She said that Pamela never did any of the certification trainings. The Journal Inquirer made a correction but it only went on the website. Marjorie got many calls from people who thought she never got certified. She is getting old and really didn’t want to do the certification process but felt it was her obligation. At the present time the Democrats have 5 trained moderators plus her and one affiliate. To the best of her knowledge Pamela has none and she is not a trained moderator. Marjorie thanked the town committee for their actions to set the record straight and to Olivia at the Journal Inquirer who apologized profusely for the error. Marjorie said she is very conscientious in what she does. Joan Lewis thanked Marjorie for her level of commitment, saying she knows it required several classes and travel.

   Micah Welintukonis, Grant Hill Road, congratulated Joan Lewis on her pending retirement from the Town Council and thanked her for her service to the State and the Town. He then made the following statement regarding petitioning Town Council candidate Mike Sobol: It is our sacred honor to protect and promote public trust and confidence by our conduct of accurate and fair elections. Whether we agree or align with a party or not. This is in regards to the recent news article on a petitioning candidate. As a former petition candidate for state wide office and former vice chairman I know the painful process of collecting signatures. Under CT General Statute Sec. 9-192a all registrars taking such office on or before July 1, 2015, shall complete such program and satisfy such criteria for certification not later than July 1, 2017. Any registrar taking such office after July 1, 2015, shall complete such program and satisfy such criteria for certification. Plus 8 hours of annual training. Under the Town Charter the Council has the authority to enact, amend, or remove ordinances. I recommend under section 4-4 Registrar of Voters an amendment to give the Council or Town Manager the authority to notify the state of a vote for recommending removal for not meeting state requirements and/or negligent duties.

4. Acceptance of Minutes:  
   Motion #19/20-29: Lisa Conant moved to accept the minutes of the Town Council meeting on August 5, 2019, seconded by Jonathan Hand. The following corrections were requested:  
   - Page 2, item 8.A, second paragraph, 10th line: change “pool” to “poll.”
The motion to accept the minutes as corrected carried with Lisa Conant abstaining and all other members in favor.

5. Consent Agenda:
Motion #19/20-30: Carolyn Arabolos moved to accept the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.

6. Reports:
A. Council Chairwoman – Joan Lewis: Joan shared a letter she received from the Coventry Volunteer Fire Association in response to the Council’s request for financial information. The Council’s request for financial information was because of the request we got to pay for CVFA’s post office box. Evidently they have taken care of it. We were looking for the association’s financial report but they did not give us that. Mike Sobol asked if there is any difference. John Elsesser said yes, we don’t know what it is but this is a snapshot in time. It is based on their tax year. All nonprofits are supposed to file either annually or semi-annually depending on their volume.

B. Council members:
Lisa Conant reminded the audience that the Arts on Main event is on Saturday from 11 AM – 3 PM in the Village. There is a Facebook page if people want to check it out. They have a lot of raffle prizes. Thanks to the community for their generous donations. There will also be a BBQ, food vendors, and organizers of the event are hoping that attendees will make a day of it and visit the David Hayes Homestead to see the sculptures. It is free. Joan Lewis said she is disappointed to miss it – she has a family reunion that day.

Jonathan Hand said he had an opportunity to represent the Council at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Clancy’s HIIT and FIT. It is nice to see new businesses and that location was one of his bus stops when he was a student. It was a roofing company back then. It is a lot nicer now. He hopes things work out for them. Jonathan also said that the small stuffed animal in front of him on the table was something his daughter asked him to bring to the meeting.

Mike Sobol said it was just about a year ago that Wicked Slice had their fire. They had a soft opening today. Mike also got his first delivery from Pizza on Main and it was excellent. It is nice to see the resurgence in the Village after the downturn from the construction. Carolyn Arabolos said she also checked it out – it is cute inside. She looks forward to eating there and at Wicked Slice. Mike said that both business owners are very responsive to the community. Carolyn said that HIIT and FIT grew from operating out of their basement to being able to open a business.

C. Finance Committee – Carolyn Arabolos:
Carolyn said that the Finance Committee met on Monday. The biggest highlight was a presentation from the Baker Group, which provides investment portfolio management. They gave a presentation about what we can do with our money market funds. They can offer a higher yield which will benefit the Town. Amanda had been talking with them and she wanted to move forward. Amanda wanted the Finance Committee to be aware in the spirit of transparency. Finance was amenable. There are no liquidity concerns. John Elsesser said we also use STIF, which has daily liquidity. It hasn’t beaten the market in several years now. As our fund balance has grown we are able to go for longer terms which should help. Mike Sobol said in his time on the Board of Education we recognized teachers and staff for thinking out of the box and bringing in additional revenue. It is nice to see that on the Town side of the table. The Baker Group is projecting $46,000 in savings which is huge. Carolyn cautioned that rates change daily so the savings are not a given. The funds will be FDIC insured. The Baker Group is based out of
Oklahoma and is looking to establish here. They currently work with three other Connecticut towns.

Other highlights from the Finance Committee meeting include:

- Amanda is still going through the process of the 60-day fiscal year closeout. She will have final numbers for FY19 at the end of August. There are benefits to having fund balance at a certain percentage.
- There are some concerns about the Recreation budget and a meeting is pending.
- We discussed whether there have been any issues at the transfer station from the temporary fee schedule. John said that Mark Kiefer hasn’t indicated there are any problems. The new scale has been ordered.
- The Tax Office processed $16 million in bills during July. A tax sale still planned this fall.
- The Assessor’s Office is still working on revaluation.
- Several employees are going for Certified Municipal Official training, including the Finance office and Town Clerk staff. John Elsesser noted that Emergency Management Director Jim McLoughlin is also pursuing this certification.
- Several Board of Education uncertified staff are pursuing early retirement so there will be some pension claims.
- The RFP for banking services will be out soon.

D. Town Manager – John Elsesser:
1. Projects Update: John said he was away on vacation last week and did not write a project memo, so he is providing a longer update.
   - The Ripley Hill sidewalk base is in. We will get curbing, final grade and paving – and hope to get it in before school starts but a lot of things need to be moved around.
   - There is a tentative closing to purchase the Warner house on Swamp Road next Thursday. Then they have 90 days to move under the Uniform Relocation Act. They have been cooperative and cordial but don’t want to move until they know they have the funds. We will take a current look at the appraisal to see if an adjustment is needed.
   - The Swamp Road detour will continue for several more weeks. Mike Sobol asked with the roads project with CT Water work in Northfields, if that will include Swamp. John replied no, it will be a permanent patch. It will be better than it is now. It will come a couple of months later. We didn’t want to do all of Swamp again. In our bonding money we had money for staff and have hired Paul Carl who was doing that type of work for the State before he retired. Paul is a local resident. He started a week ago and will be assisting Todd Penney on several projects. Our goal is to get all the catch basins and tops replaced before cold weather, but we need CT Water to finish up first. It is about 8 weeks of work if you do 1.5 catch basins a day, which is fast-paced. We may have two companies working simultaneously.
   - We sent Paul Carl to New Hampshire to inspect the culvert that is being installed at Jones Crossing. It will be installed on 8/29. We are still on pace to finish in October.
   - The microgrid project team will attend a special meeting of the Housing Authority on 9/10 for their approval and a combined meeting with Council and Board of Education on 9/12 so all questions can be answered. Then we will do separate votes.
   - Daly Road line striping is in. We did a white stripe on the sides which should help to slow traffic and keep people in lanes. It is more expensive and we won’t do that on every road, but we will consider it on roads where speed is an issue. We will also be looking at additional signage and high reflectivity signage on Daly.
We had to restrict the weight load on Pucker Street Bridge but we are hopeful it will work out that the restriction can be removed. There are different methodologies between CT DOT and the engineering firms.

The Hop River Road Bridge project will kick off on Thursday. The State will do design and engineering – there is no match for us.

Regarding the Arts on Main event – John shares Lisa’s recommendation to take the bus to the Hayes property. You can’t imagine the sculpture field until you see it. It is open only by appointment so this is a good opportunity to see it. It is on South Street toward Pucker Street.

The bathrooms at Town Hall are being renovated soon. The dumpster arrives today. The bathrooms were constructed 57 years ago. We are looking forward to the upgrade and appreciate the Council’s authorization of the funds. Mike Sobol asked if there are any funds for other cosmetic work in the hallway to improve the appearance of the cinder block. John replied that we are waiting until the bathroom project is over to evaluate. Sometimes in the winter we might have time to work on a project.

We inquired today and got information about a date for Hydrilla and Fanwort treatment. Both are being done on the same day, August 28th. The vendor is doing legal notifications but our monthly eblast will also have the information. They are recommending not swimming in the lake that day so you don’t get hit by the boat. Carolyn reiterated that the swimming restriction is not because of what is being used in the water, it is the possibility of being hit by the boat. The only danger is if you are a leafy green vegetable which is why they urge you not to water your lawn for two weeks. Jonathan Hand said the product affects photosynthesis.

Our contractor for the Lewis Hill project got diverted by state. We had to switch so now it is being done August 26th and 27th. We didn’t want to wait much longer to get the contractor we had lined up.

Todd Penney submitted our application to the State for safety improvements to the crosswalk at Ripley Hill and Main Street. It is being forwarded to the State Traffic Commission. The sign with 8 LEDs is not formally accepted by the State but they have allowed the blinking beacons. We thought that given the historic nature of the house in front of the crosswalk that the smaller lights would be better, but it is paddle activated so it shouldn’t be too disruptive. Jonathan Hand noted that they are solar so there are no additional operating expenses.

Our virtual net metering application was to be submitted today. We agreed on a plan to maximize the size of the array. We will have car ports in the middle of the back parking lot and they will be high enough for trucks and snowplows. We looked at lots of options and that was the best solution.

Public Works went to the farmers’ market to sell more compost bins and sold out again. They are very popular. Mike Sobol said we talked at Finance about WiFi challenges there – has there been any progress? John replied that our IT person went up there. He was able to block other users who were using the channel. Lisa Conant said she was there and it has improved slightly. John said there are a lot of people there - it may be that we will have to have a vendor-access-only channel. That would be the next step. The IT staff also increased the bandwidth in addition to correcting this issue.

Folly Lane Bridge is through preliminary design and is nearing the public involvement meeting. The same for the Swamp Road project. These will be done in the third or fourth week of September or early October so we can do peer review through CRCOG.

Next Friday is the deadline to submit our application for silver certification to Sustainable CT. There have been a lot of staff meetings. The hardest part was the requirement for three equity projects. We are fine-tuning those. We were bronze last
year, 60 points shy of silver, and only a few silvers were given. There are still no golds. We are learning a lot about ourselves in this process. The requirement for silver is three equity projects and we have to do three new ones. If all these projects go through we will be one of the greenest towns in the state. We think it will be notable. Last year we were interviewed by Business View Magazine, and the resulting article, entitled “Quietly Sustainable”, was one of the most popular articles they have ever had. They are coming back for another group interview. Lisa Conant asked what an equity project is. John replied it is a problem identified by the community and we work with them to solve it. It is a little different than our approach of trying to anticipate problems and solve them. Our staff culture is “just get it done.” This is a little slower and a little harder for us. One of the projects we are looking at is senior food issues - access, affordability, etc. Another project is CLC Housing who came to us. We worked with them within existing zoning regulations without needing to change them.

- We are hoping to hear soon on the Orchard Hills $1.5 million renovation grant. It will be very competitive.
- Scanning is underway at the Coventry High School walls and they have found a lot of rebar. There are some sections in the band room area where there may be some issues but it could be that the acoustic tile product is interfering with the scan.
- We are still waiting for some timeframes on oil tanks removals.
- The first negotiation meeting with CVFA on contract renewal/extension took place. We hope to have something in front of the Council in October. Carolyn Arabolos asked how long of a period it would be. John replied that a section of the contract might have to be worded so that it will be terminated if a merger happens. Mike Sobol asked when their contract is up - December? John said it would not be fair to ask for a decision from an incoming new Council. We were thinking 6/30 but it might be January. It was a very cooperative and cordial meeting.
- The drainage is done at the middle school softball field. We are working on a timetable for the football field aeration. The contractor will work directly with Anchor Engineering to keep that project moving. Mike Sobol asked for an update on the high school field. John replied that the track is done. They are working on irrigation and asked for our second tank. They are running at full speed to get ready for fall. Joan Lewis said she appreciates all the work that staff is doing.
- Mike Sobol asked if there were any anomalies for beach stickers. John replied we haven’t heard of any. We are still working on applying the recycling stickers to the tipper barrels. We had an offer from a 16-year-old to do the work but we weren’t comfortable with that. We may mail them. We’re not sure. Mike asked if curbside collection of mattresses is done. John replied yes, now they must be brought to the transfer station. There will be an article in the newsletter which will be out in September.
- Joan Lewis said there is a nice article on our microgrid program. John said we are listed on page 4 of the story. On top of what is listed we have the other solar projects. Lisa Conant noted that Coventry received the second largest grant – the first was the sub base. John noted that this is the last funding round. Joan asked if things are looking good. John said we had a positive conference call on Friday. The team has confirmed that the 9/12 date will work for them. We have given them a list of the things we want. We need to see it on a map. It is extremely complicated but we’re getting there. If there are questions on the 12th we need time to answer them. The firms that are working on it are all highly experienced in their fields, including BL Companies who has experience with a microgrid project in Bridgeport and has some input to share on lessons learned. We anticipate there will be some questions that will require research.
• Update on Eastern Equine Encephalitis: this is not a panic issue but common sense will help to deal with it. People should be cognizant of mosquitos, particularly at dusk. Most of EEE-carrying mosquitos are bird biting. Horses are more vulnerable because they stay outside a lot. There is some crossover to people. Cover up or use an appropriate strength repellent, typically with DEET. We took some steps this weekend to make sure our lifeguards were aware, protected and able to close beaches early if they felt it was warranted. There are only 6-7 deaths per year in the US from this. It is low risk but one third of people who get it die. A horse was confirmed to have it in Columbia which is close to our area. Carolyn Arabolos noted that the article said the horse was not current in vaccinations. John replied that most vets will do vaccinations but it is not mandated. Our duty is to remind people to take prudent care.

8. New Business:
A. 19/20-8: Consideration/Possible Action: Appropriation for Repairs to Community Center: John Elsesser said we budgeted $25,000 in LOCIP for Patriots Park. Typically, we look for $5,000 from Recreation and their budget is tight so we can’t ask for more. That gets us to $30,000. We had a local contractor investigate and the floor joists are rotting. The building has sunk about a foot. That has to come out and the building needs to be jacked up and reset. The price to do the repair was $38,000 and we don’t have enough money. Joe Callahan and Mark Kiefer looked at it - the repair work that was done years ago was not done with pressure treated lumber. The building is still safe but can’t go for much longer. We are getting a few other prices. While we’re there we would like to do it right and we’re not sure $38,000 will cover change orders/ contingencies. If the Council is not prepared to do this tonight, we will bring back other prices. Carolyn Arabolos asked if weather is a concern. John replied yes, we want to do it before the weather freezes. We would like to authorize up to $15,000 from the Council’s 1.5%. Mike Sobol said we were looking at the Recreation budget at Finance. Is that a consideration? John replied that they are obligated to give us $5,000. Motion #19/20-31: Jonathan Hand moved to table consideration of this matter until additional pricing information can be obtained. The motion was seconded by Mike Sobol and carried on unanimous vote.

B. 19/20-9: Consideration/Possible Action: Adoption of Vehicle Idling Policy: John Elsesser said that this initiative is worth 5 points on our Sustainable CT application, and it is a good thing to have. We were going to work on it last year but did not have the opportunity. Motion #19/20-32: Lisa moved to adopt the vehicle idling policy as presented, seconded by Jonathan Hand. John said that this will become a departmental policy. Mike Sobol asked what enforcement/ accountability looks like. John replied if you violate a town policy you can be disciplined. Our vehicle tracking system shows idle time. Jonathan said he thinks it is a wise thing for the Town, not just for sustainability points. The policy goes into great detail and these look like smart decisions. Motion #19/20-32 carried on unanimous vote.

10. Executive Session:
Motion #19/20-33: Lisa Conant moved that the Town Council enter into Executive Session at 8:47 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 present, and the Town Manager. The motion was seconded by Carolyn Arabolos and carried on unanimous vote.

Motion #19/20-34: Julie Blanchard moved to leave Executive Session at 9:00 PM. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.
11. Adjournment:
   Motion #19/20-35: Julie Blanchard moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 PM. The motion was seconded by Lisa Conant 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.*