

UNOFFICIAL MINUTES
Coventry Town Council Meeting
December 15, 2025 7:00 PM Town Hall Annex

1. Call To Order, Roll Call:

The Meeting was called to order by Council Chairwoman Lisa Thomas at 7:00 PM

Members Present: Lisa Thomas-Chairwoman, Peter Larson-Vice Chairman, Matthew Kyer-Secretary, Jon Hand, Robyn Gallagher, Mark Wheaton, and Julie Blanchard.

Members Absent: None

Also Present: James Drumm-Town Manager.

2. Pledge Of Allegiance:

Town Council members stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Audience Of Citizens: (30 Minutes - 5 minutes maximum per citizen):

Mary Ann Hansen, 74 Avery Shores:

Hansen read the following statement:

Town Council, December 15, 2025 (Mary Ann Hansen, 74 Avery Shores)

A year ago, I sold a 35,487 sq. ft. lot in the lake rural zone. My family and I held it as a separate lot since 1929. Little did I know, when I acquired new family land around it, boundary lines disappeared. I sold the lot as a building lot using the description in the deed without knowledge of the regulation. I have seen many, many building lots approved since the regulation with much less land. The buyer did a title search that did not reveal the regulation's existence. The lot has an architectural approval suitable for building, and the owner has spent significant money in preparation for building. The owner appeared before ZBA to ask for a variance on lot size. Normally a lot over 30,000 sq. ft. doesn't even have to go to ZBA for approval. **After the overwhelming audience support, ZBA voted unanimously in favor of the appeal.**

A few days later, P&Z met in executive session to appeal the ZBA decision to Superior Court. I do feel a responsibility, perhaps not legally, to help the buyer by rescinding the transaction or selling her more land. She still wants to build on this unique and beautiful lot, so she doesn't want to rescind the transaction. I do own land above the buyer's lot on Ross Avenue that has about 30,000 sq. ft. with a 100-ft frontage. If I sell her more land, that will reduce it to about 25,000 sq. ft., and the frontage on Ross will be reduced to 63 feet. The buyer now has 327 feet of frontage on Ross. The extra frontage adds little to her land, and significantly detracts from mine.

I know ZBA recognizes the lot-size problem. 40,000 sq. ft. is aspirational, rather than real. Virtually all lots around the lake have to come before ZBA for lot-size variance, and they are approved with much less land. For example: A five-bedroom house on 15,000 sq. ft. was approved at the bottom of Ross, and another house next to it with 15,000 sq. ft. A house across the street on Ross was approved on a 25,000 sq. ft. lot. A house at the top of Ross is on a 20,000 sq. ft. lot. A house on Lake View was recently approved with only a 10,000 sq. ft. lot! Only four lots in the Gerald Park Association (or 2%) are over 30,000 sq. ft. The lot I sold is one of them. My block is one of the most underdeveloped areas around the lake, because of my family. While most new construction around the lake has lot coverage of 15%, the buyer's lot coverage will be closer to 5%. I should be rewarded for protecting the lake, not penalized. ALMOST ALL the lots in the lake zone are under 40,000 sq. ft.,

and a purpose of ZBA is to alter zoning regulations set by the Town Council when the factual situation warrants it. I believe ZBA approved the buyer's application in anticipation of needed zoning changes.

Under Connecticut General Statutes 8-26, a Commission may waive requirements under special circumstances. Coventry's own zoning document states, "The Commission recognizes that each parcel of property is unique in location, dimensions, orientation, topography, etc., and the various factors in the design of the subdivisions are variable in relation to each other and to the above characteristics of the property." Not really understanding this, I think the town planner was telling me to apply for this waiver, but my lawyers told me I had no standing since I had already sold the property. I believe ZBA in a sense applied the intent of the waiver provision in its decision to approve.

P&Z says there is no hardship. Clearly the buyer has hardship, because the town refused her application to build. I, too, have experienced hardship. During the sewer project, the town contractors knocked down three of my concrete boundary markers, redrew the Avery Shores right of way THROUGH my garage, and forced me to connect to the sewer even though I had plenty of land and a new septic system. Over the past 20 years I have watched McMansions grow around me on postage-stamp lots. Moreover, my family and I have paid ever-increasing taxes on this land for over 130 years. We have preserved the open land when most others over developed. I am asking for a little discretion from you so the buyer can build and I can retain property the buyer neither needs nor wants that is much more valuable to me.

It's a really bad precedent for one town commission to sue another. For reasons not understandable to me nor the buyer, P&Z expended town resources to appeal a decision of the ZBA to Superior Court. This action was taken even though the lot is fully suitable for building and the ZBA so recognized.

ZBA will meet tomorrow in another executive session, this time to reconsider its decision. ~~I am respectfully requesting that ZBA cancel its meeting and that the Town Council consider overturning the P&Z appeal and let the ZBA approval stand.~~ As a life-long lake resident whose taxes rose 14% this year on already high taxes, I am appalled the town would spend this kind of money suing itself. The town is going after a technicality rather than looking at the big picture. You can stop this. You can drop the lawsuit, overrule the P&Z appeal, and let the unanimous ZBA approval stand. **This better alternative will save the town money.**

(or reconsider and grant a waiver.)

Dorothy Grady, 32 Cornwall Drive:

Grady shared congratulatory statements to the newly elected Town Councilors and thanked all who ran as the residents and town of Coventry are lucky there are people willing to step up to serve in this capacity.

Grady also shared a thank you to previous Town Councilor, Marty Milkovic, who retired from serving on the Town Council this term. She noted that she typically watches Town Council meetings on TV and added that she always appreciated Milkovic's preparedness and different perspectives.

Tim Ackert, 1265 Main Street:

Ackert also shared thanks to Milkovic for his service. Additionally, Ackert shared appreciation for those who run for office or work and support the residents of Coventry, especially as volunteers.

Ackert stated that he has known previous Town Councilor Matt O'Brien for many years and thanked him for all the time he put into analytical work while serving on the Town Council and all the hard work he provided for the residents of Coventry.

Ana Gopoian, Executive Director of TriCircle, (Services provided at 1153 Main Street):

Gopoian shared services that are provided at the 1153 Main Street location for hope and support of those battling mental health struggles, and/or addiction, as well as hope after loss groups. By attending tonight's meeting, she is hoping to expand the reach of available groups in Coventry.

She shared that since 2015, the town of Coventry has lost 19 people due to an overdose. She wanted to let residents know that the services she offers are available at no cost to the attendees as they receive funding from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction. Gopoian stated that these groups are provided with a licensed professional and a person with lived experience.

She stated that she has spoken with the Youth and Social Services Coordinator in town, and left emails for Town Council Chair Lisa Thomas and Town Manager Jamed Drumm. Gopoian also commented that she hopes that someone will reach out if there is anything she can do to be of support in addition to the things that are currently available in town. She shared that she would like to open more conversations and reduce the stigma around talking about addiction and mental health struggles. She shared the website for her organization: [Home - Tricircle](#).

Richard Williams, 508 Wrights Mill Road:

Williams started by thanking Gopoian for sharing about the services that are provided in town. He commented that he has been affected by addiction in his family, and it hurts having to watch family members suffer without having the right place to solve the problem. He stated he appreciates anyone who provides those services and attempts to help.

Williams also commented that he is here to share thanks to Matt O'Brien for all his years of service. He added that he is a dear friend and appreciates that he always did what he felt was best for the town of Coventry. Williams added that O'Brien always put his heart into his work and meant what he said. He explained that he appreciates O'Brien and all of his efforts and believes the town does too.

Williams also shared appreciation for Milkovic for the time he served on the Town Council as well as all others who served on the Town Council and thanked all those mentioned for their service to the town.

3.A. Recognition of Departing Town Council Members Milkovic & O'Brien:

Thomas explained that previously, departing Town Councilors used to be recognized and at some point, that fell off. She continued that she spoke with Drumm, who worked with town staff to put together recognition plaques for those who have retired from the Town Council and added that this should continue to happen at the end of every term. She reminded that this practice allows people the opportunity to come to the podium to express appreciation and gratitude for those retiring members. Thomas thanked those who spoke during Audience of Citizens.

Thomas presented O'Brien with a plaque of recognition that highlighted his years of service. O'Brien shared appreciation for those currently serving, as he understands the devotion to the community it requires. He commented that he always tried to do the best thing for the taxpayers of Coventry and hopes he succeeded. He added appreciation for those he worked with during his service on the Town Council.

Thomas presented Milkovic with his plaque of recognition highlighting his service of 2 consecutive terms from 2021 to 2025, in which he served as Vice Chair. Milkovic commented that he enjoyed his time on the Council

and working with everyone. He stated that everyone on the Town Council is working for the betterment of the town. While everyone does not always agree, everyone is working in the same direction.

4. Acceptance Of Minutes:

- December 1, 2025:

Motion: I move to accept the December 1, 2025, Town Council Meeting Minutes.

By: Larson

Second: Kyer

Discussion/Edits:

- Pg. 4, Under 6.F.1., Bunker Hill Bridge Bullet, change the paragraph for clarification from “Drumm noted that the part of this bridge in Andover is part of the Coventry project, but it is not. The Bunker Hill Bridge in Coventry is a large culvert that is within the town limits of Coventry. Construction on this has not begun, outside of planning and engineering. Construction was delayed from 2025 until the summer of 2026. Drumm updated that the bridge in Andover was paved last week and is in good condition. Next, railings will be installed, with hopes of it opening up by Christmas.” to “The Bunker Hill Bridge in Coventry is a large culvert that is within the town limits of Coventry. This is not the same as Bunker Hill Bridge in Andover. Construction on this has not begun, outside of planning and engineering. Construction was delayed from 2025 until the summer of 2026. Drumm updated that Andover’s Bunker Hill Bridge, a separate bridge project, was paved last week and is in good condition. Next, railings will be installed, with hopes of it opening up by Christmas.”
- Pg. 4, Under 6.F.1., Under Questions/Comments, 2nd paragraph, change “Wish Recycling” to “Wish-cycling”.
- Pg. 3, Under 6.F.1., 2nd bullet, 4th sentence, change “The plan to invite in the Registrar of Voters, to ask some questions.” to “Their plan is to invite in the Registrar of Voters, to ask some questions.”

For: Kyer, Hand, Gallagher, Thomas, Larson, Wheaton, and Blanchard.

Against:

Abstain:

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 member 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: Hand

Second: Gallagher

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Kyer, Hand, Gallagher, Thomas, Larson, Wheaton, and Blanchard.

Against:

Abstain:

6. Reports:

6.A. Council Chairwoman: Lisa Thomas:

Thomas read the following report:

I would like us to start with a moment of silence to honor the lives senselessly lost at Brown University over the weekend.

I feel the urgency of this moment to reflect not just on the murders at Brown University, but the increasing rise in intolerance, exclusion, divisiveness, and cruelty between human beings around this globe. Yesterday, as many of us prepared for our Chanukah celebrations, we were met with news of the targeted killing of Jewish people and others celebrating Chanukah in Bondi Beach, Australia. I can only hope that federal leadership comes to understand that the cruelty, intolerance, prejudice, exclusion, and divisiveness that it preaches causes great harm. For my part, I pledge to do everything here in Coventry to push back on such behavior. Recently, we have seen increased incidences of prejudice, anti-semitism, and targeted bullying between adults right here in our community, though we are a very caring community in so many ways. I have reached out to our Human Rights Commission to ask what we can do to provide resources and programming to help keep such behavior from spreading, and to ensure that each and every resident feels safe and welcome here.

The Coventry Cemetery Commission sponsored and organized the annual Wreaths Across America observance on Dec. 13. It was an honor to join State Rep. Tim Ackert, fellow Councilor Matthew Kyer, and Town Manager Jim Drumm to share some thoughts on this day. Many thanks to the Coventry Cemetery Commission, most especially to Claudine Vieten who organizes the event. Our gratitude as well to scout troop 65, Coventry High School's talented musicians, our veterans, and our Town of Coventry Fire EMS for their support of the event. May the memories of our deceased veterans be for a blessing, and may we find joy in those memories.

6.B. Council Members:

Gallagher reported:

- Thanks to those who came out and supported the PTO Craft Show. She added that the event raised over \$2,000 per school. She thanked all those who volunteered, including elected officials, such as herself, Jon Hand, Emma Eaton (BOE), Courtney Rossignol (BOE), and Josh Clark (BOE).
- Her family enjoyed Christmas in the Village, and she thanked all those involved in putting that event together.
- Her family also enjoyed PJ Night at CHS, where she got to watch Matthew Kyer lead the Sing-Along.

Kyer reported:

- PJ Day and Movie Night were very successful in Coventry this year, raising \$17,297 for CCMC, which is the highest amount Coventry has ever raised. He stated that this shows Coventry is a loving community.

Larson reported:

- Appreciation for all the work that was put into these big events, like PJ Day Movie Night, PTO Craft Fair, and Christmas in the Village. He added that he attended the PTO Craft Fair, Breakfast with Santa, and Christmas in the Village which were all well attended, and it is great to see local groups involved and community members coming together.

Hand reported:

- Also attended PJ Day Movie Night, which was amazing and had quite a crowd. He added it was great to see all the kids' faces light up participating in the Sing-Along.

- He added appreciation for all the other events in town, like Christmas in the Village and the PTO Craft Fair and all the hard work that went into them.

6.C. Finance Committee: Robyn Gallagher, Chairperson:

Gallagher discussed that the Finance Committee held a Joint BOE Fiscal Committee and Finance Committee meeting on 12/8/25, with a regular Finance Committee meeting to follow. She highlighted the following from those meetings:

Joint Fiscal:

- Briefly discussed shared services and reviewed the ongoing list of shared services.
- Discussed a timeline and status for making a decision on health insurance. A presentation to the entire Town Council and Board of Ed regarding this has been scheduled for February 10th at 6 PM.
- Reviewed the BOE’s CIP spreadsheet and narrative with mandatory and priority items.
- Discussed budget drivers and concerns for the BOE. Unexpected increases with special education costs have caused that line item to go over budget and required the BOE to establish a spending freeze.
- Discussed the status of the audit and look forward to a presentation to both Finance and the BOE sometime in March.

Larson noted that there was also discussion on signed agreements about locking in electrical, gas, and diesel at more reasonable rates. It was reminded that this is a part of the shared services between the town and BOE. Gallagher added that this is something that is not typically done due to a mismatch in timing, but thanks to Trahan and her advanced planning which allowed the town and BOR to address this early enough to lock in these rates.

Regular Finance:

- Received a Finance Department update from Finance Director Cherie Trahan.
- Discussed and reviewed items for future bonding.

6.D. *Steering Committee: Jonathan Hand, Chairperson

6.D.1. * Steering Committee minutes: 11/24/2025

6.E. * COVRRRA

6.F. Town Manager: James Drumm:

6.F.1 Projects/Issues Update:

Drumm highlighted the following updates:

- Mentioned earlier in the meeting that he attended the WILI radio show with Parks and Rec Director Lesley Munshower on PJ Day. During the interview, they discussed the success of the basketball program.
- CRCOG Municipal Services Committee Meeting:
 - Discussed the possibility of smaller towns having a shared Economic Development Director. Coventry has the Economic Development Commission but does not have a professional staff member in that role.
 - Future issues being looked into: Stormwater Authority, as most towns are going to be required to be a part of NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System). This will include federal guidelines (MS4 permits) to take care of stormwater treatment.

- Meeting with the Board of Directors of the Eastern Highlands Health District to discuss normal operations. They also informed that Coventry will be looking at a 3.7% increase in the service fee that is paid to the EHHD.
- Charter Revision Commission- Next meeting will be Thursday, December 18th. The Registrar of Voters and the Town Clerk were invited and will be in attendance.
- Pension Committee- Finally have enough members for a quorum and will be meeting for the 1st time in a while on January 5th at 4 PM to review the programs in place and alternatives. Drumm noted that this is great timing as he recently received a letter from the Police Union expressing a desire to renegotiate their pension plan.
- Plains Road-Permits were received from DEEP, and the town is still waiting for DPH to approve the bid package and documents. Once released, the town will go out to bid for the project and should have them returned in January, with planned construction in the Spring.
- Applied for the Aquatic Invasive Species Grant through DEEP, which allows for Coventry to receive funding of \$75,000 to go towards treating the hydrilla issue in Coventry Lake. The hope is to have an answer back in February to know if we were awarded the funds.
- Lisicke Beach- Some update pictures were provided in the Town Manager's report, and construction has finished. There is still some landscaping that needs to be done which will be completed in the spring.
- Patriots Park Improvements- A contractor has taken the tree down, and the DPW has leveled out the ground and removed the roots. The stone wall in that area was also removed in order to level out the ground for the new playground.
- Flanders Road/Cider Mill Bridge- This is a \$7M project, and the engineers meet with both Coventry and Mansfield on 12/11/25. Next steps are to have a public meeting in 2026 to receive public comments, followed by the design phase, which is expected to be completed in 2028, and construction to conclude by 2030. This is 4 years later than originally anticipated to be completed but is 100% funded between federal and state funds.
- Road Resurfacing and Sewer and Drainage- All 2025 work has been completed. Director of DPW, Bill Watkins, is now researching roadway conditions, and will provide information for road bond consideration. This list will also help to know where to allocate TAR Funds, which are state funds allocated for small town roads.

Questions/Comments:

Wheaton questioned the stormwater authority, and MS4 that Drumm mentioned, and asked if it was a state or federal designation and what it means.

Drumm explained that this originated from the Clean Water Act that Congress passed in 1972. The goal was to clean waterways from industry contamination and pollution, as there was a lot in the Northeast and Midwest. However, there was not a lot of detail in the Act, and it was left to federal government staff to create rules over the years. New rules and regulations with deadlines have been created over time since 1990. At first it started statewide, then by county, to cities and large towns. Now smaller municipalities are being impacted by the regulations and will require Coventry to inventory all storms drains (of which there are few) and identify those that a most likely to be an issue for pollutants. Testing will need to take place, monthly or quarterly, depending on the outcome. This will unfortunately be a high expense to the town, that can no longer be avoided.

7. Unfinished Business: None

8. New Business:

8.A. 25/26-26: Consideration/Possible Action: Selection of Projects for Bonding and Authorizing a Draft Resolution be Written Establishing a Referendum:

Drumm gave a little background, explaining that the Finance Committee looked at bonding some larger items that were not going to make the list for the approved capital improvement plan. The following list was recommended to the Town Council and approved for a future referendum.

Drumm reviewed each project in detail and discussed the reasons why these items are a priority:

- Fire Alarm Upgrade (CGS/GHR)- Systems are old and outdated. Replacement parts are becoming increasingly difficult to find. If the system fails, the school will be required to have a fire officer on fire watch 24/7.
- Intercoms (all schools)-Systems are old and outdated. Replacement parts are becoming increasingly difficult to find. During recent lockdown drills, there were difficulties with communication, and the system was not working effectively.
- Quint/Tanker/Ladder Firetruck- Current ladder truck is over 20 years old, and the steering system is failing, leading to difficulties in emergency situations. A tanker allows for large quantities of water to be transported to put out fires, which is crucial with Coventry's limited fire suppression sources available. With this new purchase, 2 other firetrucks within the department can be taken out of service and sold. This saves on maintenance expenses, and the money made from the sale can be used as a credit towards the cost of the new truck. There is a lead time of 3 years for the new firetruck to be received.
- DPW Streetsweeper- The DPW has a long list of items needed, but their priority is the streetsweeper, as it is almost 20 years old. It is a specialized piece of equipment, with replacement parts hard to find, and it is out of service often. Once it breaks down, the DPW stops for the season as it can't be fixed fast enough to continue with the work. Drumm shared that the NPDES will require the town to sweep the streets when the time comes to enact the MS4 permits, at least 4X/year.
- Ambulance- The EMS Department has 2 ambulances, with the goal of replacing one every 4 years. Last year's replacement was cut from the budget. In the past 6 months, 1 has been out of service more than it has been operational, leaving the department with 1 operating ambulance. This requires calling outside help for transport services, leading to longer response times. The goal is to save money by removing the "box" and putting it on a new vehicle, as this is a cabin chassis set up.

Questions and Comments:

Hand asked if Drumm knew the lead time on a new cabin chassis; Drumm replied it would take about 8 months.

Kyer was concerned that with the almost 30-year truck needing to come out of service, that no one would want to buy it. Drumm clarified that this is not the truck that would be sold, but rather 2 others that are less old.

Drumm noted that the old firetruck could be sold as replacement parts.

Kyer also commented, from personal experience, that the intercoms at Coventry Grammar Schools stop working randomly and needs to be replaced. He added that this is frustrating on a day-to-day basis and concerning for safety and security reasons.

Gallagher commented that with the lead time of 3 years on the firetruck, that it would not need to be paid for (bonded) until it is delivered, however the price is locked in at the time of the order. However, it cannot be ordered until it is approved at referendum. Gallagher also reminded that in 3 years time, Coventry will have a significant decrease in their debt.

Wheaton asked how the \$3.5M total for all these projects impacts the debt profile if it was approved, as the town website does not go past 2026. Gallagher answered that Finance Director Cherie Trahan is working on this. Wheaton stressed that this is important information for the voters when voting in a referendum and hopes that updated information that includes the debt profile overtime will be included in the communication, which Drumm confirmed it would be. Drumm also stated that the goal is to keep it flat.

Blanchard stated that she would like to see these items separated in the referendum question either by school items and town vehicles, or have people vote yes/no on all the individual items. Thomas reminded that tonight they are just approving the items that will go to referendum, not actually deciding on referendum date, etc. Wheaton commented that he thought this was approved by the prior Town Council. Thomas confirmed, but since they never made it to referendum, it should be re-approved by the current Town Council. Wheaton commented that depending on how the debt service profile would look, it would alter his decision. He requested that information be made available prior to making a decision on approving the items on this list to be put forward.

Larson agreed that he would like to have that budgetary information prior to approving but stated it seems that information will come at a later time, prior to approving the referendum. Additionally, the items discussed are all high priority safety and security items or needed due to mandatory requirements coming down the line. Drumm agreed and explained the actions are to:

1. Approve the list of items, which can be done tonight.
2. When the Council is ready, which could be tonight, they would vote to authorize the Bond Counsel to draft a resolution to go to referendum, that would need to come back to the Town Council for approval. At this time, items could be removed, or the draft resolution could be edited for whatever reason.

Gallagher explained that the projects are necessities and there are limited ways to fund them:

1. Pay it out of the 1.5% fund, which still requires a referendum as the amount is over \$100,000.
 - This impacts the bond rating.
2. Put it in the CIP, which will be included in the budget. She noted that the CIP will never be big enough to cover the amount of all these projects.
 - The total of last year's CIP was equal to only 1 of the items on the list, and it is unlikely that all these items would be approved.
3. Bond the projects, if approved at referendum.
 - Seems to be the only affordable option in order to do all these necessary projects.

Gallagher also explained that the list of projects was much longer, but the current list survived as they were deemed safety and security necessities. She clarified that regardless of the debt impact data, it would not change her decision on this matter as there is no other way to fund these items.

Kyer reminded that even with all the discussions at Town Council level, there is still the final step of voter approval. He also agreed with Blanchard's suggestion of having voters vote on the items individually to help the Council get a sense of what items voters find important. Wheaton also agreed with not lumping all items together, as it might result in all items failing at referendum due to some very large price tags.

Larson asked what it would look like if the fire engine they have fails in the 3 years it takes to get a new one. Drumm stated that there are other tanker engines, to address issues, but they would lose the ladder. Coventry

year to clarify or go into more detail on the specific goals. Thomas reminded that she drafted the goals this way to keep them broad, as she felt the sub-bullets tried to dictate how staff went about working towards these goals. She felt suggestions should come from staff on how to move forward with these things, and the Council can do what they can to support them.

Thomas explained that the Town Council goals hold the Town Council accountable to certain policy goals and provide guidance to the Town Manager and staff

Gallagher suggested having Steering looking at 1 board or commission per meeting to review the charge and have a general discussion, as long as there is not a lengthy agenda. Thomas felt staff needs to look at this first and then bring items to the Town Council. However, she reminded that it is important to be mindful of limited staff and resources. Blanchard agreed with Gallagher on having more Town Council involvement on this bullet. Blanchard also felt that not every board or commission needs a staff person, but one could be made available for certain meetings if the Board or Commission needed help. Hand mentioned that having a staff member keeps the Boards and Commissions tethered to the reality of town staff resources and abilities. It was also reminded that there are many boards and commissions that only meet quarterly, or on a much less frequent basis than the Town Council.

Blanchard suggested that for the 1st bullet, it should include information about recycling, home shooting ranges, ordinances and other items that have been brought up lately that need public education. Thomas felt that they should start with the Town Manager structure of government, as that is crucial for understanding how the town works. Depending on how successful it is, they can certainly add in other things. She felt Blanchard's suggestions were great for further down the line.

Blanchard questioned who would run the Citizens Government Academy. Thomas felt it should be staff driven, but depending on the topics could include additional participation and involvement from the Town Council or other entities. Drumm explained that many town staff could share in the efforts to serve as the “professor” for specific topics, and can include tours of DPW or the firehouses, etc. He reminded he has seen this done in other communities he has worked for.

Hand suggested if the town moves forward with the Citizens Government Academy, that a product comes out of it, like an explainer video, as the information presented and provided is reuseable.

Wheaton suggested looking into a flat mil rate budgeting process and adjusting town spending to fit that mil rate. That way the mil rate does not change yearly, town spending does. Additionally, Wheaton suggested setting a debt ceiling that the Town Council sets and does not exceed. As a Town Council goal, this would read, “Adopt a constant mil rate approach to town and BOE fiscal planning and budgeting.”

Hand was curious on how to do this, knowing that a large portion of the town budget includes contractually obligated pay increases. Even with leaving town services at the same level, there will always be an increase in staff pay. Wheaton suggested that maybe a flat mil rate may not work, but the Council could agree on an inflation-adjusted mil rate approach to town and BOE budgeting.

Kyer shared concerns voting for a goal like this without knowing more information or fully understanding the ramifications. However, he explained that he would be more comfortable voting for a goal that commits to exploring these options further to see what make sense.

Gallagher stated that the Coventry often has budgets that have increases less than inflation. However, Coventry has also been operating too thin for too long. She shared concerns that this could lead to extreme cuts by keeping a flat or inflation adjusted level without consideration of what the needs of a particular year are. She stated that if there were opportunities to spend more money, the Town Council needs to look into building back up to what was previously cut, including capital improvement.

Larson agreed with Kyer about having a hard time agreeing to this goal without more information but is interested in learning more information to see if it fits Coventry or not.

Hand shared further concerns about the unpredictable special education costs and how it would impact the budget if there was a set mil rate. He encouraged people to really dive into the budget and compare to other towns to see that Coventry runs a lean ship, while getting a lot of bang for our buck.

Thomas felt the spirit of Wheaton's comment was to look at other ways of budgeting and explained that this is something her and Drumm have seen presentations about. She agreed it was a good idea to discuss them and ask the Town Manager to include more information about the different budgeting types in the budget presentation. Hand commented it might be a useful tool for the public to see how the different types of budgeting would work and impact the town.

Blanchard explained that as part of the last bullet goal, she is still going to advocate for a joint Finance Department. Thomas agreed that this is an ongoing consideration. For now, there seems to be much better communication between the 2 finance agencies.

Wheaton reminded of a goal from the previous term regarding upgrading IT and meeting accessibility. He expressed that he was curious if this had been completed. Thomas explained that it was not completed, but it is underway and did not think it needed to be added back into the goals. Blanchard asked that Drumm add this to the Town Manager's update, in order to keep tabs with what is happening with IT upgrades.

Thomas added that it would be good to have a Town Council discussion on policies surrounding live streaming and if it is worth it for the town to continue to do, or if the on-demand video is enough.

Blanchard discussed the 2nd bullet and thought that there was an existing list of these items. Thomas clarified that the point of this goal was to look at all town properties with a birds-eye view to determine long term plans for the properties. She reminded the BOE is looking to do a facility study of the schools which may include some consolidation. If this results in the BOE no longer using CGS, that is a town owned building/property that will need to be repurposed. She reminded that the town's needs should not be isolated but connected through this goal. Blanchard agreed and stated she would like to see more collaboration and more working together under 1 tent, as 1 town and 1 budget. Thomas agreed.

Thomas also discussed the importance of positioning Coventry to be 1st in line to secure grant dollars for needed infrastructure upgrades.

Edits:

- 4th bullet, add "duplicative" after "still active". To read, "up to date, still active, or duplicative."

Nicole Archambault

Nicole Archambault, Minutes Clerk

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