

UNOFFICIAL MINUTES
Town Council Steering Committee Meeting
December 22, 2025 7:00 PM
Town Hall Conf. Room B and Virtual

1. Call To Order, Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jonathan Hand at 7:02 PM

Members Present: Jonathan Hand-Chairperson, Matthew Kyer, Mark Wheaton, and Lisa Thomas (Ex-Officio Member & Council Chairwoman).

Also Present: James Drumm-Town Manager and Alex Taylor-Special Projects Coordinator.

Absent: None

2. Acceptance Of Minutes, November 24, 2025:

Kyer moved to accept the minutes of November 24, 2025, Wheaton seconds.

Discussion/Changes:

- Pg. 4, bulleted section regarding violating the ordinance, last bullet, change “to” to “too”.

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

3. Reports:

3.A. Chairperson: None

3.B. Committee Members: None

3.C. Monthly Board and Commission Reports:

Vacancy Report:

Wheaton commented that a position is listed in row 2 of the report with a status of “expired” when their calculated end date was in the future. Hand also mentioned that it currently shows them actively serving on the Board Member report. It was clarified that a person remains “active” on the Board Member report as they continue to serve after their term expires until they resign, or someone else is appointed to the seat. It was also clarified that the end date of the position is listed for a future date (12/6/27), as that is the new term end date for this seat. The status is listed as expired because it is past the prior term’s end date of 12/6/25, and a candidate has not been appointed to fill this seat. In order to change the expired status, the volunteer would need to submit a new statement of interest form to be appointed to the seat for a new term, or a new candidate can submit a statement of interest form to be considered for appointment.

It was reminded that this is a different scenario than a vacancy, as a vacancy does not have a person actively seated.

It was requested that any seats listed as expired be followed up on to see if the person currently serving past their term is interested in being appointed for a new term.

Wheaton also brought up vacant seats on the WPCA, as he felt this board is important to have all seats filled, and the current vacancy is the Chairperson.

Motion: I move to recommend to the full Town Council to appoint Sam Belsito to the Pension and Retirement Committee for a term to expire 1/1/2029.

By: Kyer

Second: Wheaton

Discussion: Kyer commented that Belsito is highly qualified and really appreciates his commitment; Hand agreed. Wheaton asked that party affiliation be checked. It was confirmed that Belsito is a registered Republican making the current Committee make-up is 2 Republicans, 1 Democrat, and 1 Unaffiliated.

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

4.J. Veterans Memorial & Events Commission: DePaola, Jamie:

Motion: I move to recommend to the full Town Council to appoint Jamie DePaola to the Veterans Memorial and Events Commission for a term to expire 1/1/2028.

By: Kyer

Second: Wheaton

Discussion: Kyer shared appreciation for her passion; Hand agreed.

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

4.K. Veterans Memorial & Events Commission: DePaola, Peter:

Motion: I move to recommend to the full Town Council to appoint Peter DePaola to the Veterans Memorial and Events Commission for a term to expire 1/1/2028.

By: Kyer

Second: Wheaton

Discussion: Kyer appreciated his passion as well and commented that the DePaola's are wonderful for the community.

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

4.L. Veterans Memorial & Events Commission: Glenney:

Motion: I move to recommend to the full Town Council to appoint William Glenney to the Veterans Memorial and Events Commission for a term to expire 1/1/2028.

By: Kyer

Second: Wheaton

Discussion: Hand noted that Glenney is currently a serving member and thanked him for his continued service.

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

4.M. Veterans Memorial & events Commission: Nowsch:

Motion: I move to recommend to the full Town Council to appoint Rick DePaola to the Veterans Memorial and Events Commission for a term to expire 1/1/2028.

By: Kyer

Second: Wheaton

Discussion: Hand thanked Nowsch for his continued service.

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

Drumm noted that there is a 5th seat for the Veterans Memorial and Events Commission, whose term has expired, and they have not received either a statement of interest or a letter of resignation. Hand will be contacting the Commission Chair to follow up on this.

5. Discussion/Possible Action: Change to Ordinance for Parks and Recreation Commission:

Taylor briefly reviewed the changes to the Parks and Recreation Ordinance that he made following the last Steering meeting.

Taylor also read through current changes from the original review of the ordinance, section by section, for the Steering Committee to continue their discussion and review from Article III. The following edits were suggested:

- Throughout the document, restructure the sentences for clarity.
 - Section 70-66, change “ No person shall use the shore or beach of any designated swimming area of any town park for the purpose of fishing, angling, floating or launching any boat without the express written permission of the Town Manager or the Director, into the waters of Lake Wangumbaug, or for the purpose of landing any boat thereon from the waters of such lake.” to “No person shall use the shore or beach of any designated swimming area of any town park for the purpose of fishing, angling, floating or launching any boat into the waters of Lake Wangumbaug, or for the purpose of landing any boat thereon from the waters of such lake without the express written permission of the Town Manager or the Director.”
 - Section 70-76, subsection (b)(4), move “as parking areas” after “designated”.
 - Section 70-77, subsections (1), (2), and (3), move “without the express written permission of the Town Manager” to the end of the sections.
 - Section 70-79, move “within designated, marked-off areas” before “without the express written permission of the Town Manager...”
- Wheaton questioned why Section 70-69, subsection (d) was left with the authority of the Commission when others were changed to be at the authority of the Town Manager, or Parks and Rec Director.
 - Drumm responded that most emergency or time sensitive matters were placed in the authority of the Town Manager or Parks and Rec Director, as certain situations cannot wait a month for the Parks and Rec Commission meetings. However, it was felt that camping excursions are typically planned in advance and would be less likely of an emergency situation. The Commission has expressed concerns over lost authority and say, and it was felt that this is one of the items that could be left at their discretion due to the nature of the requests.
 - Kyer noted if a situation arose where the Commission could not meet, they also have the authority to authorize a designee to grant permission.
- Section 70-70, Wheaton questioned if there is value in the Parks and Rec Director consulting with the Commission on future regulation changes.
 - Drumm and Thomas noted that this does not prevent her from doing so. It is likely that the Parks and Recreation Director would do this, but it is not required by ordinance.

- Wheaton suggested adding language to note that the Parks and Rec Director can consult with the Commission. Thomas proposed adding, “The Director may choose to consult with the Commission on proposed regulations.” after the 1st sentence. Steering members agreed with this addition.
- Section 70-71, Wheaton suggested adding “Vaping” to the title, and within subsection (f).
- Section 70-71, subsection (f), change “on” to “in”.
- Section 70-71, Taylor to add references to “in town parks” to relevant subsections for clarity.
- Section 70-74, subsection (d), remove, “, and at Lisicke Beach and Patriots Park.” as this information is already included in subsection (a).
- Section 70-74, subsection (a), Taylor to look for and include a broader language surrounding service animals or remove the language, “accompanying a blind, deaf or mobility-impaired person” based on best practices.
- Section 70-74, subsection (e), remove the last sentence referring to fines, and add a reference to section 1-10 of the Code of Ordinances to standardize language surrounding fines for violation of an ordinance. This was a suggestion from a Parks and Rec Commission Board Member.
- Section 70-74, subsection (e), Kyer suggested adding language that owners of animals pick up after their animal and dispose of the waste. He commented that there are often dog waste bags left at trails, parks, etc. Taylor will add language to be more explicit.
- Section 70-84, add a sentence that states, “The Town Manager may choose to consult with the Commission on proposed activities.” and reference “in accordance with CT General State Statutes”.
- Section 70-85, change “Commission” to “Town Manager or Parks and Recreation Director.”
- Taylor to check/verify the ordinances listed at the end of each section in parenthesis prior to the ordinance being published.

Wheaton discussed Article IV, Section 70-119: Boat Use. He shared concerns that subsection (b) does not allow drinking alcohol while operating a vessel, and that “operating” is not clearly defined. He stated the boat could be docked or moored, which is still technically operating the vessel even though it is not being steered/navigated. It was discussed that this section was outside the scope of the review of the ordinance as staff was only tasked with looking at Parks and Recreation authority. Drumm added that operating a vessel while consuming alcohol also falls under the purview of the Coventry Police Department.

Taylor finalized his read through, and clarified that Article IV was mostly left untouched, outside of Section 70-124, which covers penalties for violations. A reference to Section 1-10 of the Coventry Code of Ordinances was added to standardized language for fines, as requested by Parks and Recreation Commission members.

Thomas requested that Taylor get a clean draft out to all Town Councilors via Laura Stone prior to the next Town Council meeting.

Motion: I move to bring the amended draft Ordinance for the Parks and Recreation Commission to the full Town Council for their consideration.

By: Kyer

Second: Wheaton

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

Hand thanked everyone for their efforts and collaboration during this process.

6. Discussion of proposed ordinance prepared by the Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee:

Drumm and Taylor explained that there are minor changes to the draft that were implemented after the last Steering Committee meeting. Taylor reviewed the most recent changes made to the draft.

Wheaton suggested including or adding an exception around bows or crossbows, as they fit under the air gun definition of expelling a projectile without explosive force. He stated that they are typically silent and would not pose a noise issue. However, the arrows are projectiles, and you would want a shooter of either of those to have an adequate backstop.

Thomas explained that she does not disagree that a bow or crossbow would need a backstop, but the committee was specifically tasked with studying home shooting ranges and firearms safety and were not looking to regulate bow and crossbow usage. She added that it also doesn't seem like an issue that has come up.

Taylor explained that Steering could decide 1 of the following:

- Include bows and cross bows in the exceptions, so the ordinance does not apply.
- Include bow and cross bows in the definitions of air guns, so restrictions around air guns apply.
- Leave the bows and cross bows out of the ordinance.

Kyer stated that he did not feel comfortable adding anything further at this point. He reminded that the ordinance could be amended if needed.

Taylor reminded that the Committee's intentions behind the ordinance were to do so in a minimally restrictive way, but to construct it in a way that allows the Coventry PD to work with and reference in the event of unsafe or disruptive behavior.

Thomas requested that the period be removed from the definition of "Backstop".

The Steering Committee agreed to leave the ordinance as is.

Motion: I move to add to the agenda, agenda item 9: Possible Action of Proposed Ordinance Prepared by the Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee.

By: Kyer

Second: Wheaton

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

7. Consideration/possible action: Modification to Senior Center Van Driver job description:

Motion: I move to recommend to the full Town Council to accept the modified Senior Center/Van Driver Job Description.

By: Wheaton

Second: Kyer

Discussion: Drumm explained that there has been a vacancy in this position for a while, as well as a lot of turnover in the position. Drumm continues that the Human Services Department recommended the job description be amended to alter the license required. This was recommended as the van is the primary vehicle used and handles the same amount of people, but does not require the same license as a bus driver. Additionally, the town has a bus driver on staff for the Senior Center.

The new requirement for the driver would be an F license, and the job description now reflects this. Additional changes made to the job description were formatting changes to keep with the current, newer, format that has been implemented with other job descriptions.

Wheaton shared concerns that this job description mixes both high and low complexity skills. The main duty is to drive the van, and another duty listed is to plan trips and develop new activities. He felt that planning trips and activities is more of the responsibility of a deputy program coordinator.

Drumm explained that there are other people who are planning the trips, and the Van/Bus Driver more so assists with planning and encourages ideas based on recent activities or trips. Drumm added that the Van Driver likely had more of the planning trips responsibilities before there was a transportation coordinator. He suggested changing the bullet to read, "Assists in planning trips and development of new activities and programs outside the Senior Center including enrichment, shopping, lunches, and community events."

Thomas agreed with Wheaton and felt that this bullet should be removed, as having it listed creates higher expectations and demand for compensation for a Van/Bus Driver. She noted that the staff involved in Senior Center transportation can still all sit and meet together, but this does not need to be an essential duty and responsibility for this position.

Wheaton suggested removing the following from 'Desired Minimum Qualifications', "Ability" sub-bullet:

- The last bullet on Page 1, which reads, "Ability to develop, coordinate, and direct varied activities involved in senior programming."
- The 1st bullet on Page 2, which reads, "Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with employees, supervisors, other agencies, participants, instructors, community leaders, and the general public."
 - Hand disagreed with this, as it is stating that the employee needs to work well with others, and felt it should remain in the job description.
- The 3rd bullet on Page 2, which reads, "Ability to plan and coordinate work independently without supervision."

Changes to job description:

- Under Essential Duties and Responsibilities, remove 7th bullet that reads, "Plans trips and develop new activities and programs outside the Senior Center including enrichment, shopping, lunches, and community events."
- Under Desired Minimum Qualifications, "Ability" sub-bullet, strike the 4th and 7th bullets.

Vote: Unanimously in favor.

8. Consideration/possible action: Expanded Veterans Residential Property Tax Exemptions (Not ready for action): No discussion, as the item is not ready for action.

9. Possible Action of Proposed Ordinance Prepared by the Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee:

Motion: I move to recommend to the full Town Council to consider adopting the Final Draft of the Proposed Ordinance Prepared by the Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee.

By: Kyer

Second: Wheaton

Discussion: Thomas clarified that the next step is that the entire Town Council will review the proposed draft ordinance and discuss it. At that time, there could be additional changes made if the majority of the Town Council agrees on further changes. The draft would then go back to Taylor for edits, and a clean copy brought back to the Town Council at a future meeting. She continued that if the Town Council majority agrees with adopting it as is, then the full Town Council will discuss a Resolution to be drafted and reviewed by legal counsel. Then the ordinance would go to Public Hearing to take place as the 1st order of business during a Town Council meeting.

Vote: Unanimously in favor

10. Adjournment:

Kyer moves to adjourn at 10:30 PM, Wheaton seconds. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 10:30 PM.

Submitted by,

Nicole Archambault

Nicole Archambault

Steering Committee Minutes Clerk

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