

Minutes
Coventry Town Council Meeting
September 4, 2018
Town Hall Annex



1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
Present: Matthew O'Brien, Julie Blanchard, Mike Sobol, Joan Lewis, Lisa Conant, Jonathan Hand, Carolyn Arabolos (arrived 8:08 PM, Joan Lewis seated in interim).
Also present: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Amanda Backhaus, Finance Director
2. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **Audience of Citizens:** None.
4. **Consent Agenda:**
Motion #18/19-40: Lisa Conant moved to accept the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.
5. **Acceptance of Minutes, August 20, 2018:**
Motion #18/19-41: Julie Blanchard moved to accept the minutes of the Town Council meeting on August 20, 2018, seconded by Jonathan Hand. The following corrections were requested:
 - Page two, first paragraph, first sentence: revise sentence to read, "Matthew O'Brien asked if we have talked with the Board of Education about forming a committee to consider school resource officers."
 - Page three, first full bullet, second sentence: add the words "of the herbicide" after testing.
 - Lisa Conant requested to attach her report to the minutes of the meeting. She will forward this to the clerk.**The motion to accept the minutes as corrected carried on unanimous vote.**
6. **Reports:**
 - A. Council Chairwoman – Joan Lewis:** Joan attended a BBQ at the senior center recently. There were 60 people there and everyone seemed to enjoy it. The center will be going back to their regular lunch schedule with schools this month and a great trip to Vermont is planned in October. The Arts on Main event was a wonderful afternoon. The committee put in a lot of effort and so did the people who opened their doors. There was good attendance and Joan is hoping it can be continued.
 - **6.A.1 – Special Town Meeting:** A legal notice for the special town meeting on September 5, 2018 was included on the agenda. John Elsesser noted that the meeting will take place at 7 PM in the lecture hall at Coventry High School to hear communication about the \$4.9 million Library building expansion project. The building committee and architect will be present to discuss the revised scope. Citizens will have opportunity to ask questions.
 - B. Council Members:**
Lisa Conant gave a huge thanks to the Arts Guild, volunteers and staff who did a great job pulling together the Arts on Main event a couple weeks ago. There was great attendance including a visit from the Governor. The Hayes sculpture exhibit was a big highlight and is still available to view for a little while at Mill Brook Place. Lisa looks forward to attending next year's event. During

the Arts event, Lisa spoke with residents Ed and Sue Grace about their new temporary office space rental business at 1153 Main Street in the Village, the former location of All Creatures Veterinary Hospital. The Graces have done a wonderful job to renovate the building to offer private and shared office space and small private meeting rooms for short term rental, starting at \$5 an hour. All offices will be fully furnished. Lisa believes this is a great opportunity for small businesses to access office space in town on an as-needed basis without an expensive investment, overhead or long-term commitment. Many large cities have temporary office space rentals at much higher prices and Lisa is happy to see this offered here in Coventry. For information about renting, call 860-989-0035.

Mike Sobol said the school year is underway and staff and bus drivers are doing a great job getting things off to a good start. The school administration has done a great job to get school started despite the heat, offering areas where air conditioning is available and providing water to students. The bus drivers are doing a great job managing the heat and it will be cold before you know it. There is a school open house tomorrow night.

Joan Lewis said we had an opportunity to see the new ambulance tonight. It is beautiful and has the new number 18 on it. John Elsesser noted that there was a committee made up of members of both fire departments to select the ambulance. The most significant difference is that this is the first of a pick-up style of ambulance with 4-wheel drive that will be better able to handle our New England weather. It will offer a smoother ride for patients and more safety features. The committee did a lot of fine-tuning to select the essential equipment. It should go into service in a couple of weeks after inspections and training. Thanks to Ray Eldridge for bringing it down to show us.

7. Unfinished Business:

7A. Motion #18/19-42: Matthew O'Brien made a motion to move up item 7A, Consideration/ Possible Action: Library Building Expansion Project: Response to Letter of Intent to Turn Building and Land Over to Town at Completion of Project, as the next item of business. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.

Kathleen Willet, President of the Library Board of Trustees and Libby Parada, Treasurer, were present for the discussion. Kathleen indicated that the Library Board has discussed and approved the most recent language to the proposed agreement which is before the Council tonight. John Elsesser noted that the Library Board took two actions, to approve the agreement and to approve the Library Building Expansion Committee's recommendations for revisions to the scope of the project. He also noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission has unanimously approved the 8-24 review. Joan Lewis noted that this agreement would only take place after a referendum passes. John said it would be triggered by a certificate of occupancy and held in escrow by the Town and Library attorneys so that both parties would be protected. The town attorney developed the original draft using standard real estate language. While there are not property taxes there might be other paperwork fees.

Joan Lewis asked if Council members had any questions regarding the agreement. John Elsesser said the intent would be to have this agreement resolved prior to the vote on November 6th, so there is still time if Council members don't feel comfortable about any aspects of the agreement.

Matthew O'Brien asked about a section on page 3D and said he thought we had already gotten approval of the probate court that this could be done. Didn't we investigate this? John Elsesser replied yes but the attorneys left this language in case there were any challenges, although that

would be unlikely.

Julie Blanchard asked about the paragraph on page 1 concerning property. She understands they are going to turn the building over. We give them a grant and they buy books. We give the fire department a grant and they buy trucks. If we were to break up with the fire departments wouldn't they still be town trucks? John replied there are some areas where things are donated to the Library, or have been done through fundraising, such as artwork, etc. that the grant funds do not pay for. Julie also noted that schedule A is currently blank. John replied that is a deed that can be attached. The Council's original intent was to own the building and land.

Matt O'Brien asked about item #7 on page 4 and how utilities, fuel oil and sewage charges are handled now. John Elsesser replied these are paid by the Library. Matthew said he wants to see an accounting of things that are covered by this. The intent is not to harm their grant but he doesn't want to enhance it either. John replied that those bills are readily available. They buy oil through the town contract. Matthew asked about insurance. John replied that the Town pays that through CIRMA. They are named as an additional insured. Matthew asked who receives payment if there is a claim. John replied that the building would be restored. Amanda Backhaus said the Library would pay the deductible and the rest would be covered. Matthew asked who would be the beneficiary. John replied it doesn't matter. They pay the deductible and the building is restored. Amanda offered to provide detail from the budget about what is covered by the grant. Matthew said it seems clear that we are in a perpetual agreement with the Board to always run the library. He is not saying he wants to change anything. John noted that we have an agreement for library services just like we do with the fire departments. We can provide that information as well.

Matthew O'Brien asked for details about item #15 on page 8, "Reasonably maintain the building at our expense." John Elsesser replied that we plow and they mow. Right now maintenance is somewhat shared. If there is a large capital item we try to go through the capital budget but there are some items like mechanical services that they cover. We would still need to budget those. We have been tracking those expenses for a number of years through our budget. Things like electricity we pay. Amanda said we may want to track things more closely at the beginning of the year.

Julie Blanchard asked about item #13 on Page 7 - Refunds. She thinks there should be some language – to adjust where it indicates a sum of \$1. She also asked regarding personal property if there is a grey area about insuring their artwork. John replied we have one policy that covers the Town, the Board of Education, the Library, etc. Matthew O'Brien said he is concerned about enumeration of personal property for loss of artwork. Libby Parda noted that the purpose of the Library is not to hang art. The purpose for insurance is to re-build the Library. Some of the artwork is on loan from the CT Historical Society. John noted that we have a limit on artwork under the policy.

Matthew O'Brien asked if a title search has been done. John Elsesser replied yes. It goes back to the probate issue discussed earlier. The library was deeded as a gift by the Dimock estate. Both attorneys agreed but we can't stop someone from filing. Libby Parda said this is the agreement we were asked to give by both attorneys, and by the previous Council and this Council.

The Council agreed that additional considerations will be reviewed under items 7 and 13, plus some questions about the grant. John Elsesser said the agreement could be approved at the next Council meeting or at the first meeting in October unless Council members see something that is a deal breaker. Mike Sobol said he doesn't see a deal breaker; he would just like to see clarifications in several areas.

Motion #18/19-43: Matthew O'Brien made a motion to table consideration of the Library agreement to a future Council meeting. The motion was seconded by Mike Sobol and carried on unanimous vote.

6. Reports, Cont.

C. Steering Committee – Jonathan Hand. Jonathan reported that the Steering Committee held an abbreviated meeting last month prior to the special Town Council meeting. We covered quite a few things and the main points are covered in the meeting minutes. We worked on charges for the Fire Department Transition Committee and the Girls Softball Committee for playing fields. We touched on a senior center member survey. We discussed the turnover of Avery Shores to the Town with a representative of the road committee from Gerald Park Association. The Association would like the Town to take over the road. Town standards for road takeover were discussed.

Carolyn Arabolos arrived at the meeting at 8:08 pm.

Jonathan continued that the Gerald Park Association expressed renewed interest in the road turnover and will work with Town staff to move forward. The Steering Committee also discussed development of a park and facility naming policy and an employee recognition annual event.

C.1: Discussion with Traffic Authority: Modification to Horizontal Curve Warning Signs:

This matter was also review by the Steering Committee. John Elsesser said we received a response from CT DOT regarding removal of the signs. Since they were installed for safety reasons the Town could be potentially liable if the signs are removed and the expectation is that they be maintained in perpetuity. This is not only liability – all expenses related to the project could be borne by the taxpayers. Police Chief Palmer looked at the uniform standards and we believe in areas where there have been a high number of complaints (Brigham Tavern and Parker Bridge Road) we could remove some of the reflective vertical stripes on the sign posts, leaving the ones at each end intact. The Traffic Authority would be willing to do that in areas where we have had complaints but we will have to wait until project is closed out by CT DOT.

Matthew O'Brien asked why we have to wait until after the project closes out. John replied because CT DOT would go over to the contractor to determine why are pieces are missing. It is a little experimental but removing these strips reduces a lot of the visual reflective area. Those people who don't want any signs at all may still not be happy but public safety has to be recognized as a legitimate concern. People who live on these roads may be familiar with the curves but those not familiar with the roads may need this signage for safety.

Mike Sobol asked if we can send a note back to CT DOT stating our intentions. John replied no. They will never give us permission to remove the installations but the relevant section of the code says the strips are optional. Mike asked if we are still getting complaints. John said only one person on Brigham Tavern has talked to him - we explained our approach and they seemed ok with it. The person on Parker Bridge is coming to see him this week and we don't think he will be satisfied with this approach.

Matthew O'Brien asked what about the other roads in town that are not covered by this initiative. John replied he thinks we will eventually have to do them at our expense. Reflectivity standards have changed. There is a big difference to take action against the manual vs. not getting to it. Right now we don't have the time or the money to upgrade all of them. Every one of those has to be engineered. It is a long-term issue. There is a specific deadline on stop signs. Joan Lewis asked to clarify if it is a federal requirement that has been imposed. John replied yes. We haven't gotten

to them all. We have a \$6,000 budget per year for signs. Reflectivity must also be maintained. At this point we are going to wait until CT DOT inspects the signs and closes the project out before taking any further action.

C.2: Reappointments:

Motion #18/19-44: Jonathan Hand moved to reappoint Sam Norman to the Inland Wetlands Agency, term to expire 9-15-2021. The motion was seconded by Mike Sobol and carried on unanimous vote.

D. Town Manager – John Elsesser:

1. Project Updates:

- Tomorrow we are boxing out the intersection of Richmond Road and Sam Green for the intersection realignment.
- Chip sealing is done except for Daly Road. We are using a rubber component that should last longer.
- Guard rail on a lot of bridges is going in next month. A lot of people are hitting the approach to our bridges.
- At the last School Board meeting, the chair of the walls committee gave an update. They have been working for a couple of years on code violations and lack of rebar. The good news is that DiBlasi Engineering has been working with the State to change the earthquake code for CT and that requirement would go away. Wind loading code is only on exterior walls, not interior. We will need to develop a solution to the wind code but it is not as complicated. With this change the magnitude diminishes a lot and we can move onto solutions.
- The other school building committee met and authorized the schools to take bids for the boilers at the Grammar and Robertson schools and replacement of the electric rooftop unit. They also authorized going out to bid for replacement and removal of the oil tanks. Matthew O'Brien asked if we are keeping any of the tanks. John replied they are 30 years old. Underground tanks are difficult to get re-certified. The committee had draft drawings done for the 5 sets of fire code doors and are setting up a meeting to review them with the building official and fire marshal. It looks like they will be within budget. The goal is to try to install them over winter vacation. We got letters from the State saying we are in the pipeline for code projects which is good news. Then the committee will move onto the unit ventilators for next summer. Mike Sobol said it is nice to see the security upgrades in place that prevent direct access to the school buildings. John replied that Dr. Petrone would like to invite Council for a tour to show the four security projects, the Academy and the youth building. The Board of Education had a very busy summer to get all these construction projects up and running before school starts. Next summer will be similar.
- We hired a new public works employee, Kevin Vincens, who will be starting in a couple of weeks. We may have another opening coming up and will use the same list of candidates.
- Shred-it Day is this Saturday from 9-noon at the Public Works garage.
- The Senior Center survey went out last week to follow up on the petition we recently received about senior center hours.
- We are setting up a meeting with representatives from Gerald Park Association about the road work needed to turn over Avery Shores to the Town.
- We signed the final paperwork for the Army Corps permit for Jones Crossing Bridge. A grant application was submitted.
- Two grant applications were submitted for LOTCIP funds and we await notification. We are meeting with the most affected property owner for the Rt. 44 project this week.

- We had ECG Engineering and Eco-Solar follow up on the micro grid projects. We anticipate comments and questions this week. ECG is also willing to evaluate LED lighting for the schools at no cost.
- We finalized the municipal action plan for energy as part of the Sustainable CT project. It was a lot of work so we hope to get some level of award. If we do not, the towns that do get an award really deserve it. Amanda was able to get all our energy data in one place for benchmarking and tracking. We have a lot of data. Some of it will be in the newsletter which is at the printer. We met our commitment of 20% electricity usage reduction by 2020 - one of only 9 towns in the state to meet that goal. Eric Trott and John were interviewed by the publisher of *Business View Magazine* and the Town will be featured in an article about sustainability. We will share the energy plan – and our new “high five” goals at a future meeting. We want to reduce electricity by another 5% through LED conversions. We also want to reduce diesel by reducing idling, reduce tonnage of solid waste by 5% and increase recycling. We now have systems in place to look at things better than we did before. We learned a lot and think we have a lot to be proud of. The information will all be online once it's scored at the end of October. Awards will be announced at the CCM convention. The convention is on Oct. 30 and 31, 2018. If Council members want to go let us know. The Town will cover registration but not overnight accommodations. The schedule of events will include the last gubernatorial debate.

2. **The annual State of the Lake forum** will take place on September 18th at 7 PM at Patriots Park Lodge. The meeting will include an update on hydrilla by Dr. Kortmann. We hope to have it filmed.

3. **CT DOH - Orchard Hills** – The State authorized us to use the remaining grant funds to do the roofs at the two community buildings at Orchard Hills.

4. The **drug overdose mortality data** from the Health District is scary. It shows some of the stereotypes are not what you think. The average victim is a middle aged male who starts using because of some type of injury.

7. **Unfinished Business:**

7B. 18/19-3: Consideration/Authorization for Town Manager to Execute: Memorandum of Agreement with Board of Education for Non-Resident Student Tuition (Not Ready for Action): John Elsesser said that the Board of Education has tabled this matter for further policy review, so the Council should remove it from their agenda until the Board comes back with a new proposal. We don't need it for this academic year. Matthew O'Brien asked if we could get some information about how the four tuition-paying students last year worked out. He anticipates it is five students this year. He would like to know how they dealt with the budgeting and accounting and whether the Town was reimbursed. Amanda Backhaus said she is not aware of any other situations other than special education students. Money that comes in goes against their expenditure line per Council policy. Amanda was not alerted of any non-special-education students that attended last year.

Matthew said he heard that the Board of Education has had discussions with other towns about being their high school. Is this more than 1-2 students? John replied that the Town of Columbia had discussed this a few years back but we were not prepared to provide the solution they were looking for. Windham is also shopping for a solution. Joan Lewis said one point of this MOA was to have something in place should an opportunity arise. A lot of this will be addressed in Board policies. Matthew said he would like to know how we have been handling these types of issues in our budget.

8. New Business:

A. 18/19-11: Consideration/Possible Action: Charge to the Coventry Softball Field Study Committee: Joan Lewis said that some revisions to this charge were made at the Steering Committee meeting. John Elsesser said the two changes defined who the alternate is and addresses fundraising and food service. Joan said the document was shared with the softball organization and they were amenable. **Motion #18/19-45: Mike Sobol moved to approve the charge to the Coventry Softball Field Study Committee as presented. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand.** Matthew O'Brien requested to change a sentence on the third bullet under item 4.1 to add the language "through necessary improvements." Mike Sobol and Jonathan Hand accepted this change as a friendly amendment. **The motion to approve the charge as amended carried on unanimous vote.**

B. 18/19-12: Consideration/Possible Action: Moratorium on Naming of Town Properties or Facilities: Motion #18/19-46: Jonathan Hand recommended as chair of the Steering Committee that we move to impose a moratorium on naming of Town properties or facilities for six months because we are in the process of developing and finalizing a uniform policy for that type of activity. John Elsesser said we have two separate boards that have taken it upon themselves to start naming things. The concern is that this is a power that should be maintained by the Town Council. We want to create a way for groups to recommend naming but want to put a halt to things until those criteria are finalized. Joan Lewis said that the Board of Education has a policy that is pretty good and it is one of the things we are looking at. **Lisa Conant seconded the motion, which carried on unanimous vote.**

9. Executive session:

Motion #18/19-47: Matthew O'Brien moved that the Town Council enter into Executive Session at 9:13 PM pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(B)-discussion of strategy and negotiation with respect to pending claims and litigation to which the public agency or a member thereof, because of his conduct as a member of such agency is a party until such litigation claim has been finally adjudicated or otherwise settled 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 #18/19-48: Matthew O'Brien moved to leave Executive Session at 9:34 PM. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand and carried on unanimous vote.

10. Adjournment:

Motion #18/19-49: Matthew O'Brien moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 PM. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Hand 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.