



# Town of Coventry

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**To:** Town Council  
**From:**  James Drumm, Town Manager  
**Date:** May 30, 2024  
**Ref:** Project/Issue Updates

**Patriots Park and Lisicke Beaches are open for the season:** Parks and Recreation has worked the past two months recruiting and hiring summer staff for the beaches and the summer camp at Patriots Park. There has been a shortage of certified lifeguards the last few years, but the numbers are coming back up. We have the minimum needed on staff for Patriots Park, but could use more to ensure we can cover shifts. Once again this year Lisicke Beach will not have lifeguards due to staff shortages and the increased cost of providing this service that has come out of the State increasing minimum wage. Beach passes do not cover the cost of lifeguards at Patriots Park either, but they are subsidized by other recreation program fees and rental fees collected from renting the Lodge and Mill Brook Place buildings. Recently during this budget season, I heard from a resident that Recreation programs, like the beaches, should be cut to reduce taxes or to avoid funding cuts to Police. Unfortunately, some citizens do not know that the seasonal beach programs and other Recreation programs are not funded by tax dollars, but are budgeted in the Self Supporting Recreation Fund.

**Coventry Fireworks Event at Patriots Park in 2024:** In Coventry, we have traditionally celebrated Independence Day early with fireworks. After a few years without fireworks, they will be returning this year. American Thunder Fireworks, Inc. of North Reading Massachusetts is contracted to present the 20-minute fireworks display from Patriots Park over Coventry Lake on June 29<sup>th</sup>. The Town has been working to plan the event in the park. The Town, being fiscally conservative, will not use tax dollars to fund fireworks. The Town has been successful this year in getting the needed funding with the assistance of hard-working dedicated community volunteers who have mobilized to solicit donations. The Town will recognize those that donated funds during the event in the park and in an upcoming Town Newsletter. There will be parking in Patriots Park, parking at GHR (no shuttle), and parking at CHS (with shuttle). Gates will open at 5pm. Food trucks will be onsite. Parks and Recreation Director Lesley Munshower has planned for musical entertainment, using her summer concert series funding, in the evening before sunset with the fireworks beginning just after sunset. The tax-deductible donations are being accepted and deposited by the Parks and Recreation Department. The event will be a great celebration for residents and visitors of Coventry.

**Committee/Commission and ad hoc Committee Review:** upon coming on board as Town Manager I have had the need to review some of the Ordinances and Charges of our various committees. In that limited review I found that some committees were not in compliance with their charge. The Town has numerous standing committees that cover many facets of municipal government and community

interests and issues. Recently at the Town Council meeting it was expressed by Council members that Committee charges and ordinances need to be reviewed and updated. There may be committees with similar overlapping charges; there may be committees that are not in compliance with their charges; there may be committees that may need their charges updated; and there may be committees that need to be discharged as they are no longer active or required. Due to the time demands of budget this spring, this has been delayed. It is my plan to do this review this summer and to report my findings to the Town Council Steering Committee for review and possible recommendations to the Town Council.

**New Zoning Enforcement Officer:** Nicole Damiata will begin work with the Town on June 17<sup>th</sup>. She is currently employed as a Code Enforcement Officer with the Town of Windham. She previously has served as an Environmental Specialist with the North Central Health District. She came to us with excellent references and is known to have great customer service skills. We look forward to her joining our Coventry Team!

**CHS Roof Project:** The project is primarily complete. Some final improvements (roof cuts) are delayed as they will now be coordinated with the HVAC contractor's work.

**CHS HVAC Project:** The low bid by Pro-Mech, Inc. of Bloomfield at \$11,897,800 has been awarded and the company has been contracted. Materials for the project were ordered in January-February 2024. The contractor has brought in equipment and materials to CHS (Media Center parking lot) and will actively begin construction in mid-June after school is finished.

**Revaluation Project:** The contract was awarded to Vision. They are widely used by local governments in Connecticut and throughout New England. They were used the last two times the Town conducted property revaluation. Data mailers were mailed out to property owners in March to verify the assessment information. The first mailing did not have stamped return envelopes, and so Vision has re-sent the forms out again with the return envelopes at no cost to the Town. On-site inspections with Vision staff began in mid-March and will continue as needed. The project will be completed before next January, so the adjusted valuation can be reported to the State for taxation to be applied to the 2025-26 budget year.

**Town Hall Radio Tower-Telecommunications contract:** Staff is currently negotiating with T-Mobile on a new contract replacing the outdated contract which was approved in 1996. There is no additional telecommunications equipment being placed on the tower by this firm at this time. A new contract is being developed with the assistance of the Town Attorney's office.

**Coventry Village Water Tower Project:** The Town was notified by Congressman Courtney that we have received a Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) grant of \$1 million toward the construction of an elevated water tower to strengthen and improve the village water system. The water tower would provide additional pressure and steady volume of water for the system. This is especially important for fire suppression systems that are needed for new commercial development and historic mill re-development in Coventry Village. This project could also improve the fire suppression systems at the high school, the middle school, and GHR. The total project is estimated to be \$2.5 million. The request made by the Town was for \$1.875 million dollars. The grant requires at least a 25% match. The grant will be administered starting in 2025-26 through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Program. Town staff is now exploring sources for additional funding for this project.

**Plains Road/Salt Impacted Potable Wells:** This water extension project will take much coordination with the Connecticut Water Company to complete. They have tentatively agreed to connect a newly constructed water line to their existing system in the Nathan Hale Drive area. The Town currently has State grant funding pledged for approval for 50%. However, to secure the funding, the project must be ready with design and authorized by a public referendum. The construction cost is estimated to be \$2.6 million. At the April 1<sup>st</sup> Town Council meeting, the Town Council heard from residents and had a presentation on the proposed project from staff and consulting engineers (GZA). Afterward, the Town Council voted to authorize up to \$99,999 toward surveying and design. The design is estimated to be completed by August. The project will be scheduled for a referendum in fall.

**Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) - Plant upgrade vs. Willimantic Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) connection:** The engineers, Tighe & Bond, completed their review of the costs to connect our wastewater system to the Willimantic WWTP. The study shows that the connection to the treatment plant in Willimantic will be nearly the same cost as the upgrade to the existing Coventry WWTP. However, with that reported, it is likely that the Town would be eligible for more grant funding for the Coventry WWTP upgrade than a line extension to the Willimantic WWTP. The study has been forwarded to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for their review and comment. Town staff, our engineering consultants and the WPCA are now reviewing their comments. The Town must take action one way or the other as the Coventry WWTP does not meet current State wastewater treatment standards. The WPCA presented the outcome of the engineering study to the Town Council at its February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Bolton/Coventry Sewer Extension:** The Town has planned for a sewer line extension project from the existing sewer service in the Town of Bolton eastward along US Route 44 into the town of Coventry. This was planned in the expectation that the Town may attract additional commercial growth along that corridor, which currently has some commercial development. We are reviewing the Bolton Lakes Regional (BLR) WPCA draft agreement for connecting into their sewer system. The agreement should include buy-in fees, maintenance requirements, annual use fees, billing, permitting, service area, flows, etc. As we move ahead with the agreement, The Town is still waiting on the United States EPA to prepare the grant contract. The project is funded through the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Community Projects grants. It has been reported by the Regional EPA staff (Boston) that they are still working on 2022 grants.

**Coventry Lake/Lake Wangumbaug Hydrilla Control Project:** Since 2015 the Town has worked with Dr. Kortmann, the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and consultants to combat the growth of hydrilla. Hydrilla is an invasive aquatic plant, that was not originally within the lake until it was spotted 9 years ago. The Town has been active in working with aquatic plant experts in treating the lake to attempt to eradicate the plant. The lake has been treated with Fluoridone (aquatic herbicide) from 2017-2022. Survey work has been frequently done on the lake by Northeast Aquatic Research (NEAR), which is a limnological research and lake management company, to locate invasive plants. No herbicide treatment occurred in 2023. Though no hydrilla appeared above the surface of the lake in 2023, it was spotted growing in limited areas below the surface at points along the north shore. In some areas where it had been present, it did not return. Staff have been meeting with Dr. Kortmann, DEEP, and our consultants to prepare an herbicide treatment for summer 2024 so we can eradicate the hydrilla or at least keep it from spreading. NEAR is recommending treatment of the entire Lake with Fluoridone again at an annual cost of \$119,750 each year for three years. Treatments that focus on specific areas were recommended as alternatives if funding is not available. The Coventry Lake Advisory and Monitoring Committee reviewed the report and has recommended that the full lake treatment be

continued. The Town applied for a grant from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for Aquatic Invasive Species Control on Lakes, Ponds, and Rivers in the amount of \$75,000. We were informed by DEEP that this grant has been awarded to the Town in the amount of \$75,000. The Town has budgeted the needed matching funds. The Town expects to receive the grant agreement this month, so that we can move ahead with the project over the summer.

**Patriots Park Improvement Project:** A Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant has been awarded by the State to the Town in the amount of \$315,000 for Patriots Park improvements. The project totals \$350,000, including a \$5,000 donation from the Coventry Lions Club and the municipal match of \$30,000. The project involves improvements to the band shell, a playground replacement, fencing and geese deterrent measures. Due to this and other proposed improvements to Patriots Park, the Town is preparing to embark on a master planning process for the park, inviting all stakeholders and residents to participate in sharing ideas and concepts. This process is just beginning. Proposals to complete the project were due on December 21, 2023. Seven proposals were received and evaluated by the selection committee. All firms were deemed qualified. Three firms were interviewed. FHI Studio Inc., of Hartford, CT was chosen due to their qualifications and experience with park projects, but mostly because of their creativity shown in the design of parks for the State and other towns. They will soon be scheduling meetings for input from key stakeholders, residents, and the general public. The master plan will be developed prior to any permanent improvements being constructed in the park. The project is expected to be completed in late September.

**Miller Richardson Park priorities/ADA/Amenities project:** The engineering firm of Barton & Loguidice discussed possible park improvements with key stakeholders at the September 14<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup> Parks and Recreation (P&R) Commission meetings. There was much discussion about how best to use the \$500,000 grant to improve the park for better compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Potential park amenities were discussed and a rough draft park plan was reviewed. The P&R Commission reviewed the latest draft plan at their November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Town Engineer and the P&R Commission are adjusting the plan prior to final approval. Construction plans are complete for the ADA/Safety/Amenities project. The Town is accepting bids for the project until 2:00 PM today (May 30, 2024). Construction will be over the summer.

**Curve Signage Grant:** Received letter of approval from the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT). This grant funds curve warning signs on locally owned roads. The State held a public information session and will schedule and manage the project of installing these signs. The State reported this month (May) that the project is still in design. The following streets will see new signage marking curves:

Coventry

- Cedar Swamp Road
- Dunn Road
- Grant Hill Road
- Hop River Road
- Riley Mountain Road
- Woodbridge Road
- Cooper Lane
- Lewis Hill Road
- Talcott Hill Road
- Daly Road
- Flanders Road
- South Street
- Wrights Mill Road
- Lake Street
- Snake Hill Road

**Main Street/South Street Pedestrian Crossing Project:** The Town has been awarded a Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP), a newly created state grant program designed to support rural municipalities, which are often ineligible for many federal transportation programs. The grant is \$498,000. This is a 100% funded grant for construction, with engineering being the responsibility of the Town. This project will provide crosswalks and pedestrian safety features along Main Street in the Village and along South Street. Improvements will include signage, flashing lights and curb ramps (sidewalk bumps) that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). More details on the project and a proposed project schedule are to come.

**Main Street sidewalk project:** this project is funded by a Community Connectivity grant. This project will begin at Hemlock Point Lane and go northeasterly to Winterberry. Construction plans have been completed. The design is being reviewed by CDOT for permitting. Town staff and CDOT are amending design elements. This has delayed the planned schedule of going out to bid this spring. Upon completion of this project the Town will be eligible to apply for another Community Connectivity grant to extend the sidewalk further on Main Street to Lisicke Park and additionally westward to Daly Road. This will eventually connect to planned (currently in design) future sidewalks along Daly Road. When all is complete in 2025-26, there will be sidewalks in place that circle Coventry Lake.

**Hale Trails Project:** This is a Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) grant. The project budget is \$500,000 and is funded 50% State and 50% local. The Town's match is primarily in-kind services and in-house engineering. The project design is currently paused to evaluate the wetland impact and possible alternative crossings on Bear Swamp Road at Rufus Creek. Staff is meeting with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to explain project difficulties in working with the wetland component of the project and to see if we can secure additional funding or to see if we can phase the project with the current award and apply for additional funding within a later cycle.

**HOP River Bridge Project:** Rotha Contracting Company, of Avon, CT. is on the job. Steel bridge parts are being constructed. The Hop River crossing has been closed since April 1<sup>st</sup>. The former single lane bridge is gone. The contractor is constructing the sub-structure of the new bridge. The bridge is expected to be re-opened in late November 2024. The State/Federal grant is 100% funded at \$3.6 million.

**Depot Road Bridge replacement:** The Town has been awarded a \$7.4 million State/Federal grant for 100% funding for this project. The State has agreed to provide engineering with one of their consulting engineers. CHA Engineering of Rocky Hill, CT has been assigned the project by the Connecticut DOT.

**Brigham Hill Bridge replacement:** The Town has been awarded a \$5.2 million State/Federal grant for 100% funding for this project. The State has agreed to provide engineering with one of their consulting engineers. CHA Engineering of Rocky Hill, CT has been assigned the project by the Connecticut DOT.

**Bunker Hill Bridge Replacement (Rufus Creek):** Though this project is described as a bridge, it is described more accurately as a large culvert structure that is constructed under the roadway. The project is in design with Jacobson Engineering. The Town is coordinating with the Town of Andover, as they have a new bridge project over the Hop River moving forward and we do not want to isolate the residents on this road with two construction projects active at the same time. Depending on Andover's permitting, we may begin construction in 2025 or we will have to delay until 2026.

**Parker Bridge Road-Bridge (Culvert) replacement grant:** In 2023 the Town applied for Federal/State funding to replace the smaller bridge on Parker Bridge Road. It is actually a large culvert that the adjacent creek runs through. The grant was not funded. Staff is preparing to apply again for this funding for the 2024 grant cycle.

**South Street/Swamp Road Project:** This is a major project that will improve safety on these roads and will raise the elevation of the intersection of South Street and Swamp Road. Preliminary plans are complete. This project was reviewed by the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CROG) last fall. The comments caused minor adjustments to be made to the preliminary plans. The revised plans were presented at the public involvement meeting that was held on October 24<sup>th</sup>. It was well attended by the residents of the area. Public involvement meetings are required by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) for funding from the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LTCIP). Good feedback from residents/property owners was received by staff and the project engineers. Design plans have been amended further. As design amendments took longer than expected, the project will receive bids in summer of 2024 with construction planned for spring/summer of 2025.

**Daly Road Construction Project:** This is a road and sidewalk construction project from Rt. 31 to South Street. Two Local Option Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LTCIP) grants have been approved and will be combined into one project. Funding for construction is 100%. The project will modify curves and increase pedestrian safety. Funding for design will be funded by the Town. Barton and Loguidice of Glastonbury is conducting the engineering on this project.

**Road resurfacing/drainage Improvements:** The Public Works Department has a list of streets that will be resurfaced in 2024 on our website. Paving of John Paul Lane has recently been completed. Public Works Crews have begun replacing older drainage catch basins in anticipation of future paving. They will soon resume work in the Pilgrim Hills subdivision (Mark Drive area). Connecticut Water replaced water lines there last summer. Our paving contractor will resurface streets before the end of summer.

If there is a project or issue not on the Update that you wish to learn more about, please do not hesitate to contact me.