



Town of Coventry

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To: Town Council
From:  James Drumm, Town Manager
Date: May 2, 2024
Ref: Project/Issue Updates

Coventry Fireworks Event at Patriots Park in 2024: Upon my arrival in Coventry in August, I heard from several residents that they were hoping that the annual fireworks display could be restored. I had learned that there were a few non-profit groups in the past that had worked with the Town to hold the event on the last Saturday of June. I also learned that these groups were no longer prepared to move forward in 2024. In December I was encouraged that we may be able to restore the event, as I was approached by a group of citizens, led by Tim Ackert, who wished to serve as the Fireworks Display Fundraising Committee. Municipalities nationwide host fireworks events. The Town historically has been the one to contract the fireworks, and so it was planned that, if fully funded, this would be a Town organized event. With the 250th Anniversary of American independence coming up in two years, I believe it would be good to restore this patriotic event in anticipation of the greater national celebration in 2026. Parks and Recreation Director Lesley Munshower is planning to use Recreation summer concert funds to pay for musical entertainment the evening of the event. The funding has always been the main concern, as the Town, being financially conservative, does not allocate tax funds for the \$15,000 needed to display fireworks. In recent months, we did not see the donations coming in as expected. However, the Fundraising Committee has recently collected 50% of the required funds for fireworks. Though it looks promising, more donations will be needed before the event can go on. Donations are being accepted and deposited by the Parks and Recreation Department.

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. It is my plan to do this review this spring-summer and to report my findings to the Town Council Steering Committee for review and possible recommendations to the Town Council.

CHS Roof Project: The project is primarily complete. Some final improvements 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 is preparing to begin work this week.

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 has been 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 1st 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 referendum for late summer or early fall.

Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) -Sewer Pipelining Project: The Town contracted with Insituform Technologies of Charlton, Massachusetts for \$131,839 in January to clean and line sewer lines around Coventry Lake. This has been a planned budgeted project for the WPCA. This project is now complete. This infrastructure improvement project was funded with Federal grant funds through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) - Plant upgrade vs. Willimantic Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) connection: The engineers, Tighe & Bond, have 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. Upon receiving comments on the report from DEEP, the Town will be able to evaluate the grant funding opportunities for both alternatives. 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 4th 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. The project has some hurdles ahead as we are waiting for the Bolton Lakes Regional (BLR) WPCA to send us a draft agreement for connecting into their sewer system. The agreement will include buy-in fees, maintenance requirements, annual use fees, billing, permitting, service area, flows, etc. The BLRWPCA Attorney is working on the details of the agreement, and it will soon come before the BLRWPCA Board. The project is funded through the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Community Projects grants. The Town is waiting on the United States EPA to prepare the grant contract. 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 last week that this grant has been awarded to the Town in the amount of \$75,000. The Town has budgeted the needed matching funds.

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 September.

Miller Richardson Park priorities/ADA/Amenities project: The engineering firm of Barton & Loguidice discussed possible park improvements with key stakeholders at the September 14th and October 12th 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 16th meeting. The Town Engineer and the P&R Commission are adjusting the plan prior to final approval. Construction plans are being developed for the ADA/Safety/Amenities project. This project will go out to bid in May. 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 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 just 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 for \$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 and the project is now being prepared to procure the services of a contractor. 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 have been ordered. The Hop River crossing has been closed since April 1st. The single lane bridge is now down. The contractor is now beginning construction of 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.

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 24th. 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 (LOTICIP). 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 (LOTICIP) 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.

Street sweeping: Public Works staff will be busy this spring and summer sweeping streets with the Town's Street sweeper. This activity helps remove pollutants from the roadways before they may get into the stormwater drains and ditches which lead to streams, lakes, and rivers. The U.S Congress adopted the Clean Water Act of 1972. That legislation over the last fifty years has resulted in new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) rules and regulations on stormwater runoff and water quality. In 1999 Phase II rules were adopted that apply to municipalities. Street sweeping by municipalities is just a minor, but important part of these State and Federal requirements. Based on regulations known as the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) now being applied to most municipalities, the Town expects to see more stormwater quality initiatives that are un-funded mandates impacting our Town in the years ahead.

Road resurfacing/drainage Improvements: The Public Works Department has a list of streets that will be resurfaced in 2024 on our website. The Public Works Director is reviewing lists and is preparing to schedule work for late spring. Public Works Crews have begun replacing older drainage catch basins in anticipation of future paving.

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.