



# Town of Coventry

1712 Main Street • Coventry, CT 06238 • Fax (860) 742-8911

**To:** Town Council  
**From:**  James Drumm, Town Manager  
**Date:** November 14, 2024  
**Ref:** Project/Issue Updates

**Red Flag Warnings/Fire Weather Alert:** The burn ban has been lifted by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for all State lands and parks. Additionally, this morning the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) has lifted the Red Flag Warning for Connecticut. Effective this morning, Coventry Fire Chief/Marshal Bud Meyers lifted Coventry's ban and a CivicReady Alert/social media post was distributed.

**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. In spring, the Town Council expressed 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be committees that may need their charges updated; and there may be committees that need to be discharged as they are no longer active or required.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 conduct this project this fall and to then report my findings to the Town Council Steering Committee for review and possible recommendations early in 2025.

**Town Accountant vacancy:** Stacy Blake-Geist has been hired to be our new Town Accountant. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Eastern Connecticut State University. She is currently employed with the Willimantic Housing Authority and has been for about 10 years. She will start December 9th. Former Town Accountant Stephanie Fox has agreed to come back on a few Fridays to assist in Stacy's training.

**Building/Land Use Administrative Assistant vacancy:** As Heidi Leech was promoted to Zoning Enforcement Officer on October 21<sup>st</sup>, we are now recruiting for a Building/Land Use Administrative Assistant. Interviews will be scheduled during the first week in December.

**Transfer Station Operator vacancy:** As Danielle Baker recently transferred to the full-time position of DPW Maintainer 1/Custodian, we are now recruiting for Transfer Station Operator.

**CHS Roof Project:** The project is primarily complete. The Roofing contractor and the HVAC contractor are coordinating roof cuts. The coordination is going well and has not slowed the HVAC project down. This coordination will allow the roof contractor to soon finalize and close out the project.

**CHS HVAC Project:** Our contractor Pro-Mech, Inc. of Bloomfield is on the job. Coordinating with the wishes of the BOE, they completed installations with larger rooms like the science labs, cafeteria, and math classrooms over the summer. The work on classroom installations has extended into the school year as was expected. Work on units in classrooms within the school are being done in sections (5 classrooms at a time) throughout the fall. Progress meetings with the engineer and contractor are regularly held and the School Building Committee receives progress updates monthly. The School reports that the contractor is working well with coordinating work schedules with the needs of the students and the teachers. Eversource is working with the contractor and the engineer on determining the size of the transformer that will be needed. The total cost of the construction project is \$11,897,800. An additional \$46,000 will be added to the project cost for the commissioning agent. State grant funding will cover \$6,602,148 of the project, with the remaining amount being financed by bond funds. The project is expected to be completed by late spring 2025.

**Revaluation Project:** The contract was awarded to Vision in 2023. They are often 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. This year he included acreage on our data mailers. This has helped in providing more accurate records and uncovering some discrepancies. The Assessor released notices this week. Any changes resulting from the hearings and possible continued research will require notice of change or no change being sent before January 31, 2025. The assessor's early projections of 35-50% increase in assessment, based on other towns and the early analysis of market changes/sales in conjunction with further evidence of our values being low in 2019, have now increased. The assessments have increased in percentage as follows:

<u>Waterfront:</u> + 68%	<u>Non-Waterfront:</u> + 58%	<u>Land:</u> + 23%
<u>Condo:</u> + 55%	<u>Commercial:</u> + 13%	<b><u>Townwide:</u> + 60%</b>

The project will be completed before January 2025, so the adjusted valuation can be reported to the State for taxation to be applied to the next tax collection cycle. Information about the Revaluation has been reported to residents in the recent eblasts and the Fall Newsletter, which is sent to all homes. Residents were informed that they should not assume that their taxes will go up proportionally because of the assessment change. They were informed that the mill rate will be decreased due to the assessment, however the final mill rate for the next budget year will not be adopted until after the FY 2025-26 Budget process is completed.

**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. The contract is currently being reviewed by the attorneys representing T-Mobile.

**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. The Town is coordinating with Connecticut Water Company on possible locations. The Town will soon be seeking professional engineering services to evaluate the sites and to see what improvements may be necessary to connect to the water system in Coventry Village.

**Plains Road/Salt Impacted Potable Wells:** This water extension project involves 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. We have learned this past week from the CT Department of Health (DPH) that we have secured a Small Disadvantaged Communities (SDC) grant from the U.S. EPA in the amount of \$787,000 to add on top of the approximate 50% subsidy. This will reduce the Town's expense to less than 25% of the total project cost. The construction cost is estimated to be \$2.6 million. The survey work has been completed. Our contract engineer, GZA Geoenvironmental, Inc., has completed the preliminary engineering. It has been reviewed by staff with recommendations for amendments. The amended preliminary engineering will be completed by mid-December. It will be presented to Town Council at one of the January Town Council meetings. Council will need to determine if the Town will add this project on a future public referendum authorizing debt to construct the improvements.

**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 did meet with DEEP representatives in June. DEEP indicated that the WPCA will need to conduct an environmental impact study regarding the preferred option of upgrading the wastewater treatment plant. The Town must take action one way or the other as the Coventry WWTP does not meet current State wastewater treatment standards. The WPCA is currently in process of selecting an independent firm to conduct the evaluation of the upgrade of the Wastewater Treatment Plant project under the requirements of the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA). Request for Proposals (RFPs) are due by December 19, 2025.

**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. Town staff is negotiating with the Bolton Lakes Water Pollution Control Authority on the connection fees to their utility system. After approving the connection fees, a separate agreement will be required to address maintenance requirements, annual use fees, billing, permitting, service area, flows, etc. The Town is also working with the United

States EPA to prepare the grant contract. The project is partially funded through the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Community Projects grants. Additional funding will be required possibly through bonding and sewer connection assessments.

**School Street Drainage Project:** This small drainage project involves the replacement of partially crushed drainage pipe that crosses four lots and School St. It eventually connects into a drain on main Street (CT Route 31). Gerber Construction was awarded the contract and is currently on site. The project is expected to be completed within the next two weeks. The project is budgeted at \$138,000 and is fully funded by LoCIP grant funning.

**Enbridge Algonquin Gas Line Improvement project:** I have reached out to Peter Babich with the CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to request information on natural gas emissions and air quality monitoring systems. He has provided some information on his office's sensor loan program. He also indicated that the pressure regulation facility that is being installed in Coventry is not regulated under the Clean Air Act (not subject to air permitting) and that it is much different than the compressor station in Cromwell, because they must monitor emissions (into the air) at that facility. There is no further update at this time.

**Coventry Lake/Lake Wangumbaug Hydrilla Control Project:** The Town will apply to the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP for the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) grant for the 2025 fluoridone treatments. The 2025 year will be the second year of the most recent three-year Treatment Plan that has been recommended by our consultants. The Town has been treating the Lake to battle Hydrilla, since it was first identified in 2015. The AIS grant application is due on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

**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 conducting a master plan process for the park. The project is expected to be constructed in 2025.

**Patriots Park Master Plan:** Over the last several months the Town has been inviting all stakeholders and residents to participate in sharing ideas and concepts to imagine a redeveloped Patriots Park. Our consultant, FHI, using the input received, is preparing a draft Master Plan that will be presented in a public forum to seek further input. The Master Plan will allow the Town to work on future grant applications (in phases) to further the redevelopment of the Park. The master plan draft was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission at their November 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. A second draft plan will be presented in December. Additional public input will be sought prior to finalizing the master plan. The master plan will be completed prior to any permanent improvements being constructed in the park. The project was expected to be completed in late October, however due to delays in organizing meetings with stakeholders and the public, it is now expected to be completed in January 2025.

**Miller Richardson Park priorities/ADA/Amenities project:** The Town has hired All Seasons Landscaping Inc of Cheshire, CT. to construct the park improvements that were set in place for phase one in the Miller-Richarson Master Park Plan. This work includes a new roadway design and sidewalks for better pedestrian safety and the construction of several ADA (American Disabilities Act) elements to accommodate handicapped residents. The project costs \$590,000, with \$500,000 being State grant

funds and the remaining \$90,000 being locally funded. Work began September 3<sup>rd</sup> with the mobilization of materials and the removal of trees. The contractor has been grading the alignment of the new roadway and parking areas. The project was scheduled to be completed in December, however the dry weather conditions have delayed the completion of the earthwork that is being done for the roadway. As the Asphalt plant will soon be closing for the season, the project, if not completed within the next few weeks, will likely be suspended until Spring. Coventry Softball and baseball leagues have been notified of this possible delay. This project totals \$590,000 in cost, including a \$500,000 State grant, with the remaining amount coming from local capital funds.

**Curve Signage Grant:** The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT) has awarded our Town a grant. This grant funds curve warning signs on locally owned roads. The State held a public information session in 2023 and will schedule and manage the project of installing these signs. The State has been slow to move on this project, as we have not seen a construction date set yet. Last week, I contacted the CDOT design engineer, Claire Sylvestre, for an update on the project and learned the engineering is complete. The overall project includes several Towns. She transferred this project to the CDOT Construction Office. The State has contracted with the “Discount Fence Company of Connecticut” to do all the installations. Currently there is not an expected date of installation, as the contractor has not yet determined the planned order of construction in the several towns in the contract. Additionally, they may be impacted by weather as we enter the winter. I will report more as it becomes available. The following streets will eventually 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). This project is in engineering. The project is planned for construction in summer/fall 2025.

**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. The design had been reviewed by CDOT for permitting and rejected. Construction plans are being amended to move retaining walls outside of the right of way at the request of CDOT. Work will involve acquiring additional easements for retaining walls. This has delayed the planned schedule of going out to bid. Upon approval of the final design by CDOT, the Town will seek bids. 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 has had a meeting with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to explain project difficulties in working with the wetland component of the project and have found that we can phase the project with the current award and apply for additional funding at a later cycle to address the wetland crossing or bypass. Engineering is being amended to reflect the changes.

**Hop River Bridge Project:** Rotha Contracting Company, of Avon, CT. has done an excellent job in building this new bridge. The new bridge, which opened last month, has a gray stone trim which matches the historic gray stone walls from the remains of the old mill. The project consistently ran ahead of schedule. The contractor is still working on a punch list, but will soon be able to complete the overall project. This bridge project was funded by 100% State and Federal grants. The cost of the entire project is \$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. As Andover's permitting will begin construction in 2025, we will have to delay construction of this project until 2026. The Town was awarded a \$700,000 grant for this project. This is a 50/50 State/Local funded project. The local match was budgeted with existing bond funds.

**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 last year. Staff has again applied for this funding for the 2024 grant cycle. The Town was recently awarded a \$714,000 grant for this project. The total project cost is \$1,428,000. This is a 50/50 State/Local funded project. The local match was budgeted with existing bond funds.

**Flanders Rd/Cider Mill Bridge:** We have learned from CDOT that the Town will soon be receiving an award for another Federal bridge replacement grant. We will be formally making an application for funding to replace the bridge, as required under State regulations. The project is planned to begin with a public meeting in June of 2025; followed by design completion in January 2026; and then construction

to be completed by December 2026. The estimated cost of the project is \$7,070, 000. The State/Federal grant award is expected to be 100% funded.

**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 (CRCOG) 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, 2023. 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 to include a gap area along South Street and the State has awarded \$442,800 additional funding to cover this area. As design amendments will not significantly delay the project, the project will receive bids in March/April of 2025 with construction planned for summer/fall 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. The preliminary design has been reviewed by CRCOG and is now being reviewed by CDOT. Construction is estimated to be set for summer 2026.

**Road resurfacing/drainage Improvements:** The Town has completed all paving work for the season.

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.