



Town of Coventry

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To: Town Council
From: *JD* James Drumm, Town Manager
Date: May 1, 2025
Ref: Project/Issue Updates

Coventry Tax Sale: Former Revenue Collector Carrie Zahner in January put forward 20 properties to tax sale for failing to pay their tax bills. The total amount owed was \$359,618. Attorney Cohen at Pullman and Cromley listed these properties on the firm's website (cttaxsales.com) for a tax sale scheduled for May 9, 2025 at the Town Hall Annex. Fourteen properties to date have paid their back taxes and have been removed from the list. Eight properties remain. The amount to be paid from the remaining properties is \$112,482.56.

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be committees that may need their charges updated; and there may be committees that need to be discharged as they are no longer active or required. I have planned to present my findings to the Town Council Steering Committee in groupings for review and possible recommendations. The first report was on the Parks and Recreation Commission, which is currently being reviewed by the Steering Committee.

Assistant to Assessor: interviews are being scheduled.

Finance Director: Former Mansfield Finance Director Cherie Trahan is currently serving as interim Finance Director. The job vacancy, though listed as open until filled, has been relaunched to get a fresh spot on the job pages of CCM and the Government Finance Officers Association of Connecticut (GFOA-CT).

Collector of Revenue: Ms. Kelly Lawer has been appointed to this position and will be starting on May 6, 2025. She is currently the Tax collector for the Town of Lebanon, CT. She has held that position since 2019. She has an Associate of Arts degree in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix and is a CT Certified Municipal Collector.

Assistant Accountant: Interviews will be scheduled.

Senior Center Assistant: Recruitment for this position has been frozen due to budgetary concerns.

Mechanic's Helper: Recruitment for this position has been frozen due to budgetary concerns.

School Readiness Council Appointment: State Statutes require that each School District have a School Readiness Council. Joan Lewis was the Town's representative, however she resigned from her seat in 2023. Her resignation letter was never forwarded from the BOE to the Town Clerk, until recently. Without notice, the Town believed Ms. Lewis was still an active member. In the interim period Youth Services Coordinator Melissa Bordonaro filled in as a non-voting member representing the Town's interest. Upon learning of Ms. Lewis' resignation, it was determined that a new appointment would need to be made. The BOE indicated that the appointment was the Town Manager's appointment. I have appointed our current Youth Services Coordinator Madison Baronoski to this seat. She has a BA degree in English from Muhlenberg College and a Master of Arts degree from the University of New Hampshire in Community Development Policy and Practice. She previously served as the Community Impact Director with the Middlesex United Way where she worked with inter-agency grant programs. Prior to that, she worked as the Director of Programming and Administration for the Laura Mahoney Autism & Epilepsy Foundation, where she developed and administered youth and adult service programs and supervised administrative operations. Before that she worked in various positions with youth with behavior health needs. She has been with the Town since September 23, 2024. Madison has been active in her role and has been very interactive with the BOE and other youth agencies regionally. I am confident she will represent the Town well.

Materials Management Infrastructure (MMI) grant: the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has announced that Town has been awarded the MMI grant to construct a food waste/leaf composting facility at DPW. This program will also include the purchase of counter-top collection containers. The total amount of the grant is \$202, 895. The Town Council has pledged up to \$5,000 in NIPS funding for the containers.

CHS Roof Project: The Roofing contractor (Greenwood Industries) and the HVAC contractor (Pro-mech coordinated roof cuts over the fall and winter. That work has been completed. We were ready to close out the CHS roof project, however we learned from the contractor that there is a manufacturer's recall issue with certain materials used on the roof. The contractor found a separating seam between the panels of roofing material. Based on this product failure, the manufacturer provided a fix for this issue. They have begun repairs. Repairs will need to occur before the Town accepts the roof. This will also be required before the BOE to make a request for the final school grant reimbursement from the State. The BOE is in process to request a partial reimbursement for grant funding. The portion of grant funding for the architectural services has been found to be in jeopardy, as it was determined that the Town did not follow State Statutes regarding the selection process in 2022. The Statutes called for not more than four vendors to be interviewed and evaluated. The Town/BOE at that time interviewed and evaluated five engineers. In July of 2024, this requirement which stifled competition was repealed. In fall of 2024, the Town made an official request to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to waive the Statue on the record in 2022, when this evaluation process occurred. Since we have not had any determination to our response after several months and inquiries, we have asked Rep. Ackert to sponsor special legislation to waive the application of the old requirement on our project, so that the Town could recoup the grant funding that was awarded. We believed that this was especially appropriate as the General Assembly found in 2024 that this policy restricting competition needed to be removed.

CHS HVAC Project: Our contractor Pro-Mech, Inc. of Bloomfield is still 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 summer 2024. The work on classroom installations extended into the school year

as was expected and completed at the end of January. An A2 Survey for an easement for Eversource has been completed. A legal description is being prepared. A change order is expected due to the need to replace the support railing on the roof for new equipment. Additionally, we expect another change order to build a pad for the new transformer, since we now know there will not be a change out of transformers but there will be an additional transformer placed onsite. This week we learned that the addition of a transformer, instead of a replacement, will require additional electrical work not originally anticipated. Eversource has identified the size of transformer needed and we understand one is currently available. They have not provided us with an estimated time by which we can expect to receive it, however we hope to have it soon. The total cost of the construction contract is \$11,897,800. Additional change orders are expected to increase the cost. 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 summer 2025.

Town Hall Radio Tower-Telecommunications contract: Staff are 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. They have been slow to respond.

Coventry Village Water Tower Project: The Town was notified last year 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 is currently 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. The Town is also seeking additional funding for construction.

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. CT Department of Health (DPH) has informed us 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., is now completing the engineering and providing services for permitting. The project was presented to the Town Council at the January 21, 2025 Town Council meeting. The Town Council determined at that meeting that this project should be placed on a future public referendum requesting authorization for debt to construct the improvements. At the February 18, 2025 meeting the Town Council authorized funding for permitting that would allow the installation of a water line along the South Street extension right of way. Application has been made for SRF grant/loan funds so that funding may be designated by

the State, should the voters of the Town choose to approve funding this construction project at the May 6th referendum. The Town has received a DPH notice of funding for the project. This would include additional funding for possible project contingency needs. The funds are now pledged, but will not be obligated by DPH unless we see passage of the referendum and the execution of the loan documents. DPH indicates the loan is a 10 year or a 20 year loan at 2% interest.

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 was 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 2024. 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 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 Qualifications (RFQs) were received December 19, 2024. Only one was received by SLR International Corporation of New Haven, CT. An interview was held in March. The WPCA is preparing to contract for services.

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 are 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 has also been 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 had been delayed for over 10 years due to project complications and lack of dedicated funding. It involves the replacement of a partially crushed drainage pipe that crosses four lots and School Street, which then connects into a drain on Main Street (CT Route 31). In order to save funds on this project, the project was broken into two phases. Gerber Construction completed phase one, which included the more difficult DOT right-of-way at \$138,000 which was funded by a LoCIP grant. The DPW Highway crew will complete phase two this spring replacing the remaining sticks of pipe crossing School Street and within adjacent Town easements. They had hoped to do it this winter, but the snowy weather has kept them from gaining ground on this project.

Enbridge Algonquin Gas Line Improvement project: The project is completed. The only thing remaining is the seeding of grass. There is not any new information to report on this issue at this time.

Coventry Lake/Lake Wangumbaug Hydrilla Control Project: The Town has received the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) grant for the 2025 fluoridone treatments. Matching funds and funds for monitoring the lake have been budgeted in the proposed FY2025-26 Budget. Summer 2025 is the second year of the three-year Treatment Plan that has been recommended by our consultants

Booth and Dimock Library Historic Preservation Grant: The Town was selected to receive the \$6000 grant by the State Historic Preservation Office for repairs to the historic portion of the Booth and Dimock Library. The project specifically will make repairs to the framing and joists supporting the floors in the reading rooms under the bookshelves. As you may recall the project is a total of \$12,000 with the library providing the match from their endowment fund. The Town will receive the formal award notice and more information from the State Historic Preservation Office about the grant agreement.

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 pavilion, playground replacement, fencing and geese deterrent measures. In late 2024 and early 2025, the Town conducted a master plan process for the park. The project is now complete. The grant is being amended, and construction plans are being developed. The improvements are expected to be constructed in Fall 2025 and Spring/Summer 2026. Once the Town actively begins construction, we will be eligible to apply for future STEAP grant funding.

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. Work began September 3rd, 2024 with the mobilization of materials and the removal of trees. The contractor graded the alignment of the new roadway and parking areas. The project was scheduled to be completed in December 2024, however the dry weather conditions at that time delayed the completion of the earthwork that was needed for the roadway construction. As the Asphalt plant closed in December for the season, the project was suspended until Spring. They are now back on the job and are actively working. They have constructed the roadway, installed drainage, curbing and the sidewalks. They will be working to complete the project in the next week. It is expected they will have 97% of the job done by Little Leage opening day on May 3, 2025. 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. 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. This project has been placed on hold as additional engineering is needed to reflect project changes.

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. Scouring tests have been completed showing that replacement is warranted.

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. Scouring tests have been completed showing that replacement is warranted.

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 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. CDOT has given the Town an extension on this grant award. 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. The project is in engineering and is expected to receive a permit from the Inland Wetlands Commission.

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 that year. Staff has again applied for this funding for the 2024 grant cycle. The Town was 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. The project is now in engineering and will require adjacent right of way at the crossing of a un-named creek, so to re-align the crossing.

Flanders Rd/Cider Mill Bridge: The Town has been awarded another Federal bridge replacement grant. We have contracted and obligated these Federal grant funds. 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 (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, 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 (LTCIP). Good feedback from residents/property owners was received by staff and the project engineers. In late 2024, design plans were amended further to include a gap area along South Street and the State awarded an additional \$442,800 to cover this area. The design amendments did not significantly delay the project's engineering, however this addition required the need to acquire multiple new easements. The focus on this project this summer and fall will be easement acquisition from property owners. This will delay the bidding of this project until spring of 2026. Construction is now planned for summer/fall of 2026.

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 have been 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 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 is reviewing the Summer 2025 road paving list, setting priorities, and is scheduling road work. Work is scheduled to begin with Lathrop Drive in the next couple weeks.

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.