

**MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING**  
**June 5, 2025**

The Special Budget Meeting of the Town of Coventry was held on Thursday, June 5, 2025 in the Coventry High School Lecture Hall, Ripley Hill Road, Coventry, CT. The Meeting was called to order by Lisa Thomas, Chair of the Town Council at 7:00 p.m. with 54 eligible voters in attendance. Also present were non-voting staff, members of the community.

Chairperson Lisa Thomas called for nominations for Moderator of the meeting. Carolyn Arabolos, 132 North Farms Road was nominated by Jillian Wood-Reviczky, 110 Wall Street seconded by Peter Larsen, 33 Cooper Lane. Being no further nominations, Ms. Arabolous was declared Moderator.

At the request of the Town Clerk, Ms. Arabolos read the notice of this meeting and stated that said notice, signed by the Town Manager and the Town Clerk, was posted on the Town Signpost on May 31, 2025 and a copy thereof was published in 'The Chronicle', a newspaper of general circulation in its issue of May 31, 2025.

The Moderator explained that in accordance with Section 7-6 of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, as amended, only an elector of the town or a citizen of the United States of the age of eighteen years or more who, jointly or severally, was liable to the town for taxes assessed against him, based on an assessment of not less that \$1,000 on the last completed grand list of the town or who would have been so liable if not entitled to an exemption as a blind person or as a veteran or as a parent or surviving spouse of a veteran would be entitled to vote at this meeting and the Adjourned Special Budget Meeting to be held on June 17, 2025.

Item #1: To hear the Town Council's estimate of expenditures for the fiscal year July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

James D. Drumm, Town Manager, and Dr. Dave Petrone, Superintendent, presented a brief review of their respective budgets.

Item #2: To consider and take action on the Town Council's recommendation for the 2025-2026 fiscal year appropriation, pursuant to Section 9-1 of the Town Charter, the final vote shall be adjourned by the Moderator to June 17, 2025.

General Government	\$ 12,305,630
Board of Education	31,457,874
Debt Service	3,314,306
Capital Expenditures	462,315
Ambulance Fund Transfer	<u>288,146</u>
Total Appropriation	\$47,828,271

Motion: Katherine Clark, 104 Leslie Lane moved, seconded by Shawn Fillmore,

236 Old Tolland Tpke., that the Town Council's recommendation for the 2025-2026 fiscal year appropriation be approved as follows:

General Government	\$ 12,305,630
Board of Education	31,457,874
Debt Service	3,314,306
Capital Expenditures	462,315
Ambulance Fund Transfer	<u>288,146</u>
Total Appropriation	\$47,828,271

Moderator explained that pursuant to Section 9-1 of the Town Charter the final vote on Item #2 will be adjourned to June 17, 2025, the meeting continued for the purpose of discussion and possible amendments. The Moderator encouraged all those who wished to speak to remain on topic and keep their comments brief. Discussion followed:

Bozhem Pekhnyle, 73 Tall Oak Drive

Spoke on how do we move forward with these cuts. The cuts will effect the students being successful. Dr. Petrone responded that we piece together what is left and move on.

John French, 392 Pucker Street, Chairman of Republican Committee

Spoke on first budget failure and thanked the Interim Finance Director for the correct numbers with about \$39,000 savings from this current budget. This budget is the best that it can be. He supports this budget. Also, wants the Town and Board of Education to form a committee to examine the possibilities of share services to save money.

Christina Williams, 436 Ripley Hill Road

She also made a motion to amend the budget by \$1.00 as follows:

General Government	\$12,088,629
Board of Education	31,682,874
Capitol	462,315
Debt Services	3,314,306
<u>Ambulance Fund</u>	<u>288,146</u>
Total Appropriation	\$47,828,270

She stated that the \$1 deduction and the redirected \$225,000 from the General Government to the Board of Education would restore critical programming built over the last 10 years that was cut.

It was seconded by Jonathan Birdsey, 21 Timber Trail.

Christina also spoke to the Town Manager about a statement made about no services being impacted on the Board of Education. Mr. Drumm responded that primary services were not impacted.

The moderator asks Town Clerk, Lori Tollmann about possible vote on this amended motion. Announces we will come back to this motion after referring to the Charter. Discussion continues.

Malcom Gill, 119 Woodland Rd.

Commented on the Governor and hopes that the State will give back funds to Special Education. He has no problem with the budget but questioned the revenue and losing revenue on cars. Town Manager, James Drumm responded that 21 million was removed from the tax roll and with in the same year we had reval.

Shawn Fillmore, 236 Old Tolland Tpke.

Thanked Mr. Drumm & Dr. Petrone for their educational presentation. He is disappointed with the funding of education in town. Further cuts mean cuts for our children. You need to vote yes on this budget.

Moderator checks with status of Charter with the Town Clerk. Town Clerk, Lori Tollmann states how she is interoperating the Charter. Christina can make that motion. But the Town Attorney should make the ruling. She also states that with such a short timeline the ballots are already prepared and ready. There would be a delay in absentee ballots being issued. Someone from the audience stated that the Town Clerk was out of order with that statement. That the Town Clerk was speaking against the motion that was on the floor.

Moderator had Christina Williams repeat the numbers in her motion.

Moderator continues discussion on the amended motion

Katherine Clark, 104 Leslie Lane

Watching this is a complete circus, super frustrated with the manipulated data from the first vote. Both the Board of Education and Town Council deliberated very carefully with this budget. This motion puts them in a very difficult position. Concerned that no one knows the little time and the impact of this. She would like to know what this budget impact would look like with this shift.

Courtney Rosignol, 73 Brenda Lane

Spoke about being in the Coventry School System while growing up. The school system did not have what they have now. Afraid of continued reductions to the Board of Education.

Dorothy Grady, 42 Cornwall Drive

Spoke that she does not understand how this motion fits in with our Town Charter.

Moderator asks Town Clerk to read what is printed in the Charter. Town Manager, Town Council Chair Lisa Thomas question what can be done and what cannot. All three leave the meeting to convene with the Town Attorney Duncan Forsyth. Discussion continued at this time.

Ryan Jones, 43 Twin Hill Road

Spoke on Coventry Schools doing a great job. Impressed with the data and organization. Upset with losing personnel on the Board of Education side. People move here because of the school system, not the fire department, DPW, Police, that is not what attracts people to Coventry. Businesses should be paying more taxes than homeowners.

Rick Martin, 195 Northfield Road

Spoke on Christina Williams motion that it was an interesting proposition. Asked her what should be cut from the Town side. Christina Williams answered. \$225, 000 was selected very carefully. That amount restored to the Board of Education would restore the essential programming, does not restore the positions. The ways the Town could save on \$100,000 IT contract with South Windsor. Other ways to save shared custodial services and taking one admin from each office in the Town Hall.

Sandy Simon, 425 Gerldine Drive

Spoke on keeping the bottom-line number for the budget and have the Town Council restructure the line items later.

William Zenco, 18 Maryanne Drive

Respectively Madam Chair, unfortunately I believe the motion is out of order. You can reduce by \$1 but just the total appropriation.

Donald Kenerson, 153 Lakeview Drive

Spoke that if this budget fails, it's going to get worse. Vote yes.

Leonard Theroux, 119 Ashbrook Drive

Appreciated the explanation of why the property tax is so much higher. Didn't the state have changed the way cars are taxed. This takes money out of the Town. The Town needs to educate the public more on the budget. By educating people may support the budget.

The moderator calls on Town Manager for a decision from Town Attorney Duncan Forsythe on the amended motion on the floor from Christina Williams. Town Manager James D Drumm stated that the motion is out of order for two issues. The first issue was combining more than one item together in motion by reducing and then removing money from certain appropriations. The Second is a statement from the Charter. Briefly it states that an amendment to the main appropriation can be made to reduce, not increase the total appropriation. Also, the Moderator stated that there was a question concerning Sandy Simons question on whether we can vote and then Town Council changing numbers after the vote.

William Zenko, 18 Maryanne Drive

Madam Moderator, you need to rule that motion out of order.

The Moderator rules the motion on the floor out of order. The moderator also confirms there is no vote at this meeting. The vote is adjourned until June 17<sup>th</sup>. Repeats the motion on the floor was ruled out of order.

Continued with discussion.

Patrick Wagstrom, 51 Edgewater Drive

Spoke on changing the Town Charter to be able to vote on the Board of Education and Town separately on the budget. Thinks six of the seven members of the Town Council don't deserve to be reelected next year. Vote yes on the budget and take some action because this has been a train wreck that we all saw coming, with the leadership we elected.

Dorothy Grady, 42 Cornwall Drive

Spoke on the hours given by the volunteers that are on the Council and Board of Education. Happy to see new people here. People wanting more education on the budget and the process should go to meetings and have their voices heard. Thanks, the Town Council and the Board of Education.

Joseph Malon, 777 Pucker St

Spoke on people not knowing the hard work involved being on the Council. He was a Council member. Hundreds of hours are put in and the pay stinks. Budget on the Town side, happy with the Public Works, roadsides are good. You could lay off some in the Town Hall, but they do a good job. The DPW is good. I go in and torture them with my comments and questions. Board of Education. Spoke on the weight room and \$500,000 and where did that money get moved to. Dr. Petrone responded. Mr. Malon wanted to know if the weight room was more important than the teachers or the students.

William Zenko, 23 Maryanne Drive

Nice to see new faces in the room. Spoke on 38 years of people in this room volunteering and the person who said those "Rascals" should be out, who is going to replace them. You look and the boards and commissions are from my generation. If You want to throw them out, you need to get involved. If they don't do that, they have no recourse to say anything. Mr. Zenko has served on the council for 10 years. If you want changes, you need to do the work.

Jill Wood-Reviczky, Wall Street

Spoke on the previous budget vote and had 3,000 people voting and have 9,000 people registered. Get your neighbors out to vote yes. She agrees with others on the insulting of the Council is not right. Hopes people vote yes.

Ryan Jones.43 Twin Hill Rd.

Thinks people are frustrated with the system, not any particular person. Spoke on the school system and the children. Most aggrieved people are the children. Charter revision, the town would support the school system. Town leadership We should work on make sure to feel the same way on services.

Moderator explained that Item #2 on the call to this Special Budget Meeting will be submitted to the legal voters of the town for a vote by paper ballot on Tuesday, June 17, 2025 during the hours between 6:00 o'clock (a.m.) and 8:00 o'clock (p.m.) (EDT); that the voting take place in the polling places established for voting districts #1, & #2 will be at the South Coventry Fire House, and that the voters entitled to vote by reason of Section 7-6 of the General Statutes of Connecticut, revised to January 1, 2025 as amended, may vote at the Registrar of voters Office, Absentee Ballots will be available at the office of the Town Clerk as provided by law.

The moderator ordered the Town Manager and the Town Clerk to prepare, post and publish a proper notice with respect to voting at the Adjourned Special Budget Meeting.

Moderator adjourned the vote on Item #2 to June 17, 2025 and further adjourned this meeting at 8:51

Respectfully submitted,

Received for filing  
June 25, 2025

Lori Tollmann, Town Clerk

Brooke R. Manning  
Assistant Town Clerk