



## LAND USE

*Above: Thornton Brook Preserve, Coventry's newest parcel of open space, became accessible to the public in the summer of 2014. Photo by Eric Trott.*



# TOWN OF COVENTRY ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year:  
2013 – 2014



*Open Space - Willimantic River Access - Brigham Tavern Rd.*

## **LAND USE OFFICE**

*Inland Wetlands Agency*

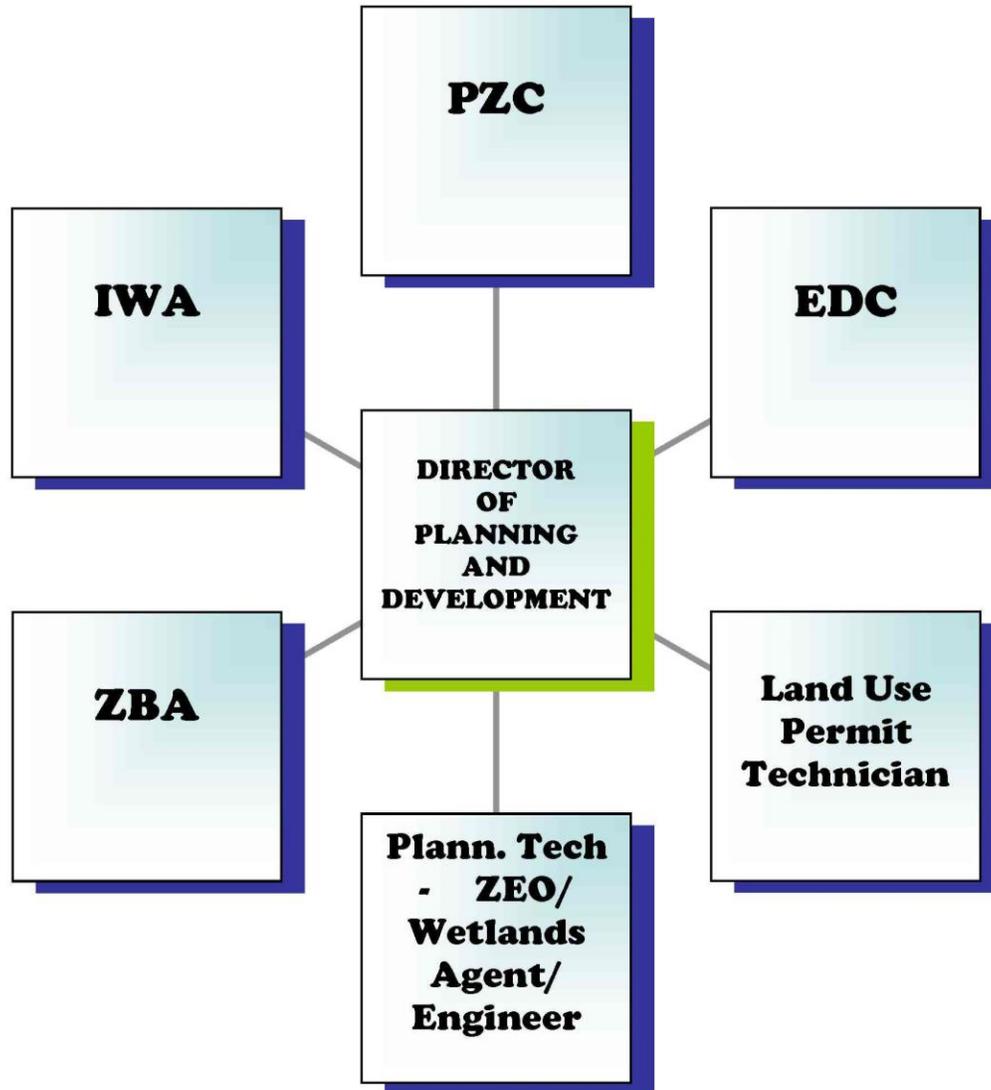
*Zoning Board of Appeals*

*Economic Development Commission*

*Planning and Zoning Commission*

Eric M. Trott, Director of Planning and Development  
Michael Antonellis, Planning Technician/Zoning Enforcement Officer  
Todd Penney, P.E, Town Engineer/Wetlands Agent  
Heidi A. Leech, Land Use Permit Technician

## ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING CHARTS



**Director of Planning**

**Planning and Zoning Commission**

**Planning and Zoning Commission**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>	<b>10/11</b>	<b>11/12</b>	<b>12/13</b>	<b>13/14</b>
<b>Meetings</b>	59*	49*	22*	20	17	14
<b>Applications</b>	21	25	27	13	10	13

The Commission meets twice a month for regular meetings. Only one meeting is regularly scheduled for the month of December.

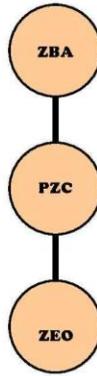
\*The number of meetings was higher during certain fiscal years due to the fact that the Commission held special meetings for review of the revised Zoning Regulations, Zoning Map and Plan of Conservation and Development.



**Economic Development Commission**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>	<b>10/11</b>	<b>11/12</b>	<b>12/13</b>	<b>13/14</b>
<b>Meetings</b>	11	11	11	9	10	10

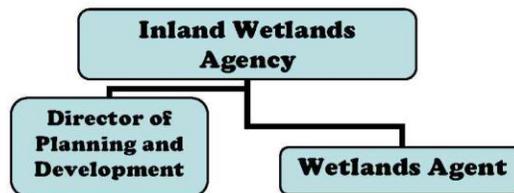
The EDC is scheduled to meet once a month excluding the month of November.



**Zoning Board of Appeals**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>	<b>10/11</b>	<b>11/12</b>	<b>12/13</b>	<b>13/14</b>
<b>Regular Meetings</b>	5	7	10	6	4	7
<b>Special Meetings</b>	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Applications</b>	9	17	15	7	2	5

The Board is scheduled to meet once a month.



**Inland Wetlands Agency**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>	<b>10/11</b>	<b>11/12</b>	<b>12/13</b>	<b>13/14</b>
<b>Meetings</b>	*13	11	13	12	12	13
<b>Applications</b>	51	35	39	28	28	31

The Agency is scheduled to meet once a month.

**LAND USE OFFICE**  
**BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS SERVED**

**Planning and Zoning Commission**

The purpose of the Land Use Office and Commission is to protect public health, safety and welfare through the administration of the zoning and subdivision regulations. The Office/Commission is responsible for reviewing development applications (i.e. subdivision, special permit, text/map amendment, site plan review) as well as guiding and managing land use activities. The Commission reviews and updates the zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, plan of conservation and development, and zoning map.

The Director of Planning and Development reviews all subdivision, special permit, site plan review and text/map amendment applications. In addition, technical assistance is provided to the Planning and Zoning, Economic Development, Conservation Commission, Coventry Lake Advisory and Monitoring Committee. The Director of Planning and Development oversees the Land Use Office and staff (Planning Technician/Zoning Agent, Wetlands Agent, Permit Technician and Recording Secretaries.) The Director regularly meets with members of the public, realtors, attorneys, etc., to discuss development procedures and options to provide guidance and advice on land use matters.

The Planning Technician/Zoning Agent is responsible for insuring that the Town's zoning regulations are complied with and directs enforcement activities when necessary. The PT/ZEO reviews all zoning permit applications, inspects properties for certificates of compliance, and proper erosion and sedimentation controls. The PT/ZEO answers daily zoning inquiries (phone, walk-in). The PT/ZEO provides staff assistance to the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning and Zoning Commission and Conservation Commission.

**Inland Wetlands Agency**

The Inland Wetlands Agency (IWA) provides regulatory oversight for all activities (land disturbances as defined by the Regulations) involving wetlands, water bodies, and watercourses; including defined upland review areas from the wetlands, water bodies, and watercourses. The IWA reviews enforcement activities directed by the Wetlands Agent. The IWA reviews and updates its regulations. The IWA is responsible for administering the State's Aquifer Protection Regulations as directed by Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (D.E.E.P.).

The Inland Wetlands Agent is responsible for ensuring that the Town of Coventry's wetlands regulations are complied with and directs enforcement activities when necessary. The Wetlands Agent reviews all zoning permit applications that may involve regulated wetlands activities and inspects properties for proper installation of erosion and sedimentation controls. The Wetlands Agent answers daily wetlands inquiries and provides staff assistance to the Inland Wetlands Agency. The Planning Technician/Zoning Agent and Director of Planning and Development assist in the basic Wetlands Agent functions when the Agent is not in the office.

### **Zoning Board of Appeals**

The Zoning Board of Appeals is responsible for the review of variance, special exception and motor vehicle dealer and repairer applications. The ZBA also reviews appeals taken of the decisions/actions of the ZEO.

### **Economic Development Commission**

The Economic Development Commission is responsible for promoting the Town's business development in an effort to provide a blend of necessary services and employment while enhancing the commercial tax base of the Town. The EDC reviews all major economic development proposals and provides recommendations on an advisory capacity. The Director of Planning and Development provides staff support to the EDC.

### **Conservation Commission**

The Conservation Commission is an advisory commission that focuses on environmental, conservation and open space matters. The Commission is responsible for making recommendations on open space purchases, planning and updates to the Open Space Plan and Natural Resource Inventory. The Commission is also involved in other efforts, such as stone wall awareness and maintenance, Adopt a Road program and provides recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission on land use applications.

### **Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee**

The Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee is a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission that focuses on issues relative to Coventry Lake and its associated watershed. The Committee serves as an advocate for the Lake, compiles data and performs analysis on information that pertains to lake water quality, aquatic invasives and other threats to it. The Committee organizes activities for the Coventry Lake Awareness Month each July and works with Staff to organize the yearly State of Coventry Lake Forum. Efforts are underway in the development of a Lake Management Plan as well.



## PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

**Members: (As of June 30, 2014 end of fiscal year)**

<b>Raymond Giglio</b>	<b>Ed Marek</b>	<b>Darby Pollansky</b>
<b>William Jobbagy</b>	<b>Christine Pattee</b>	<b>Robertta Wilmot</b>
<b>Eric M. Trott, Director of Planning and Development</b>		
<b>Heidi Leech, Permit Technician</b>		

### COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:**

Despite the downturn of the economy over the past few years, the Commission has still authorized a number of significant economic development projects over the past fiscal year. These projects involve substantial improvements to existing businesses.

Planning Staff carefully worked with the owner of the Lakeview Restaurant to accommodate a new outdoor patio seating arrangement that takes advantage of a recently approved zoning text amendment. The Commission approved the new flexible seating approach and approved a proposal for outdoor musical entertainment on the patio. The Commission carefully administered the application and balanced the needs of the business owner with those of the neighborhood to create an amicable approach with the proposal.

The 'On the Go' gas station and convenience store on Route 44 store began work on a complete redevelopment of the site to accommodate a larger store, new canopy, parking arrangement and outdoor seating – picnic area. The applicant returned to the Commission to seek approval for a modified special permit that would allow for a large cooler addition that provides the store with increased floor area and retail space. The Commission handled the proposal quickly to allow for it be accommodated during construction.

#### **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:**

Due to the current economic downturn, fewer residential subdivisions and developments have been submitted for consideration when compared to previous years. It appears that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future. The Town is fortunate to be in a situation where a number of larger subdivisions were approved in the past which provide an adequate 'bank' of available lots for development. However, the Commission approved one new open space design subdivision proposal of a sizable nature as well as several smaller 1- 2 lot subdivisions.

The Commission approved a 14 lot open space subdivision proposal for the former Maynard Farms property on Riley Mountain Road. The development will be served by access from an existing road stub on Woodmont Drive and will provide a much needed emergency access road connection through the Maynard property to Riley Mountain Road. The proposal includes the conveyance of nearly 40 acres of open space that abuts other open space in the Rolling Woods Subdivision on Merrow Road. An existing trail system on the Rolling Woods open space will be connected to the Maynard open space.

The Commission approved several special permits to allow for the redevelopment of existing residential lots on Coventry Lake as well as ones involving vacant land. This trend has increased slightly over the past couple of years. Staff attributes the availability of public sewer as assisting the situation, since the wastewater needs are more easily addressed.

The CT Equestrian Center took advantage of a relatively new zoning regulation that they help to sponsor that allows for the establishment of farm labor quarters. The Commission approved the creation of a second residence on the horse farm and riding center that will house additional staff and support for the Center.

#### **OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

In the fall of 2011, the Commission formed a working group of members as well as representatives from the Town Council, Inland Wetlands Agency, Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Conservation Corps and Coventry SOS. The mission of the group is to carefully examine and study the various components of ‘open space – protected lands’ in Town. The group met on a monthly basis for nearly two years in an effort to understand the experience the community has had over the past decade and previously with open space matters. Statutes, regulations, developments, studies, reports and other resources have been evaluated by the group. The draft final report was completed in the late fall of 2013. The Group has continued to solicit public comment on the document. The goal is to request all member Boards and Commissions accept or acknowledge the report. Planning Staff serves as the staff support for the working group.

The Commission approved a series of amendments to the subdivision and zoning regulations that reflect consistency with recent statutory changes relative to bonding of developments. At the same time, the Commission approved a number of zoning text changes that provide more flexibility and responsiveness, in particular to the business community.

#### **PLANNING STAFF HIGHLIGHTS:**

Planning Staff continues to serve as the Town’s representative on the Route 6 Regional Economic Development Council and serves as secretary of the Council. The Council was formed by the Towns of Andover, Bolton, Columbia and Coventry to analyze the economic development potential for the Route 6 corridor that traverses each of the member towns. The Towns recognize the importance of working cooperatively to plan for the region’s future along a significant transportation corridor. The main task that the REDC continues to work on is the preparation of zoning regulations and design guidelines that will serve all four towns of the Corridor. The goal is to have harmonious and consistent regulations and design criteria that will achieve the goals and recommendations of the Corridor Studies. Due to vacancies that occurred in the Bolton and Columbia Planning Offices, it caused for a delay in the work associated with the project.

Land Use Staff continues to improve the GIS platform in the office. A GIS User group consisting of a number of Town Hall Staff continue to meet once a month with the Town’s IT consultant to discuss ways of improving and expanding the GIS system. The Land Use Office uses the information to provide more effective and comprehensive research and planning for the community as well as permit administration.

The Town Council adopted a Blight Ordinance in 2010 to address properties that have become distressed or abandoned. The focus is to gain compliance from the property owners to correct weed lots, dilapidated structures, debris storage and motor vehicle/equipment storage. The Land Use and Building, Health and Fire Offices are the hub of activity for enforcing the ordinance. Planning Staff serves as the coordinating staff for the enforcement activities by receiving, coordinating and administering efforts with the various Town Staff involved. A great deal of time continues to be dedicated to coordinate efforts of the enforcement program. The program has proven to be successful overall in addressing many blighted properties throughout Town. The Town Council also adopted a revision to the Ordinance that provides broader allowances for the Town to enter private property and assist in clean-up efforts when required. A great deal of time has been spent during the past fiscal year working with the Town Attorney's office to address several significant blight matters that needed a court remedy. Staff has also employed the assistance of the State Housing Prosecutor in the State Attorney's Office to assist with certain problematic situations when a standard legal approach is not sufficient.

Planning Staff prepared a DEEP Open Space Acquisition Grant in order to purchase the Williams property on Cooper Lane. The Town has financially partnered with Joshua's Trust to leverage funding with the State grant. The 63 acre property is a very significant one due to the fact that it abuts the Couch Preserve, which is owned by Joshua's Trust as well as other important natural resource features. The awarding of the grant is anticipated in the fall of 2014.

Planning Staff worked with the Director of Parks and Recreation to prepare a DECD Office of the Arts Placemaking Grant in order to prepare a strategic arts plan for the community. The funds requested would allow for a consultant to be hired through the Peer Advisory Network, which is an agency who typically works with the Office of the Arts. One goal with the project is to reconstitute the Arts Commission, which was absorbed into the Parks and Recreation Commission many years ago. The awarding of the grant is anticipated in the late summer of 2014.

The Planning and Zoning Staff and Parks and Recreation Department continue to work with the Conservation Commission to prepare new trail maps of various Town parks that can be available as either a hardcopy or for download on the Town's website. Staff performs site walks to obtain GPS data points for the mapping and site inventories and evaluations are collected that serve as a basis for the map narrative. Maps are available on the Parks and Recreation Department website for the following Town properties: Millbrook Park, Riverview Trail Park, Patriot's Park Woods and Creaser Park. New maps are currently being prepared for Thornton Brook Preserve and Laidlaw Park.

Planning Staff facilitated volunteer efforts to continue the performance of trail improvements on two walking trails that were in need of attention. The Girl Scouts performed trail blazing activities in Laidlaw Park to improve access on existing trails to encourage expanded use. The 4H Club performed similar activities for the Thornton Brook Preserve property. The Town is very appreciative for the volunteer efforts of the Girl Scouts and the 4H Club.

Planning Staff continues to work with the State of CT Department of Agriculture on a project that involves the purchase of development rights on the Reynolds Farm, a significant 100 acre agricultural property that possesses frontage on the Willimantic River. The Town intends to utilize existing open space purchase funds and leverage them with funds from the CT Farmland Trust, Joshua's Trust and the CT DoAg. The closing on this project is expected in the winter of 2014.

Planning Staff spent a great deal of time with other Town Staff to execute the Solarize Coventry program which concluded in the fall of 2013. Coventry was chosen by the Clean Energy Financing Investment Authority to be involved with the SolarizeCT program which allows citizens to participate in a group purchasing program to install photovoltaic solar systems for their homes at discounted prices. The Town selected a preferred installer that served the residents. The program was very successful and the Town was able to achieve the lowest prices for the residents by encouraging town-wide inclusion in the program. Ultimately, the number of residential solar systems tripled in town due to the benefits of the SolarizeCT program.

Planning Staff spearheaded an effort with the Planners of Bolton, Mansfield, and Tolland to prepare and submit a Regional Performance Incentive Grant from the State of CT Office of Policy and Management. A total of \$160,000.00 was requested to hire an economic development consultant to prepare a study of how the Towns can leverage the development that is to occur with the UCONN Tech Park. The grant also included opportunities to gain assistance with the consultant in executing the study as well as other economic development projects in the respective Towns. The awarding of the grant is expected in the fall of 2014.

Planning Staff worked closely with the Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee to plan for the 2014 State of Coventry Lake public forum that is held annually in September. Guest speakers were chosen for the forum based upon an agreed upon topic. This year's focus was on a new rain garden 'app' that was created by the UCONN Extension Service. Dr. Kortmann, the Town's lake specialist spoke in detail about the aquatic invasive situation in the Lake as well as other potential issues of concern. The Committee provided an update on their work to prepare a Lake Management Plan, which Planning Staff is assisting in the preparation.

Planning Staff and the Planning Tech continue to work with the Conservation Commission on the preparation of town-wide bike route mapping. The goal is to create a variety of different routes that meet different cycling capacities and connect points of interest, such as parks, recreation areas or business areas. The completed maps are available on the Conservation Commission section of the Town website. Staff began working with the Commission to develop a bike plan for the community as well. An initial draft has been completed and is being reviewed. It will be necessary to confer with the Department of Public Works and the Town Engineer, which will likely occur in the spring of 2015.

Planning Staff prepared a Department of Housing Main Street Investment Fund Grant to request funds to execute a number of improvement projects in Coventry Village that dovetail with other grants and projects soon to be executed. The proposed projects include: continuation of sidewalks where the CT DOT project and STEAP project ends; pocket park at Teleflex; gazebo, bridge, landscaping in Millbrook Park; improvements to the Tracy Shoddy Mill to allow for adaptive re-use. The awarding of the grant is expected in the late summer of 2014.

Planning Staff worked with Staff from the Town of Mansfield to prepare a DEEP Aquatic Invasives Grant to request funds to execute an eradication plan that will address the Fanwort infestation in Eagleville Lake. The Town learned of the problem by way of a report that was prepared by the CT Agricultural Experiment Station. Last year, representatives from both Coventry and Mansfield met to discuss methods to educate the public on the problem and to position the towns in the event that funds become available to address the problem. The awarding of the grant is expected in the fall of 2014.

Planning and Zoning Staff continue to work on an ongoing vision of the extension of the Millbrook Greenway. In the spring of 2014, a community forum was held to seek input on a variety of planning options for the continuation of the trail system, some involving private property. The input was very helpful to determine the most feasible connections. One key parcel the corridor is the Decue property on Depot Road that the Town acquired via tax sale last year. The Town expects to prepare a DEEP Recreation Trails Grant later in 2014 to request funds to construct improvements that will continue the Greenway.

Planning Staff prepared and was awarded a ‘Clean Up! Green Up!’ grant in the amount of \$500.00 from the Last Green Valley to purchase materials that supported Earth Day clean-up efforts in town. Trash pick-up equipment and lunch gift cards were purchased to assist the volunteers who participated in the town wide clean-up efforts. The trash grabbers that were purchased have been adaptively re-used by some of the volunteers in the adopt-a-road program in town.

Planning Staff prepared two separate grants to seek funds to replace the Coventry Lake Gate outlet. A Hazard Mitigation Grant and Flood Erosion Control Board Grant were submitted. The Town was short-listed with the Hazard Mitigation Grant, but ultimately did not receive the funds due to prioritization of other communities affected by Storm Sandy. However, a great deal of the information that was prepared for these grants allowed for the preparation of a DECD STEAP Grant for the same project. The Town was ultimately awarded the STEAP Grant. Planning efforts were underway during the summer of 2014 and construction is anticipated in 2015.

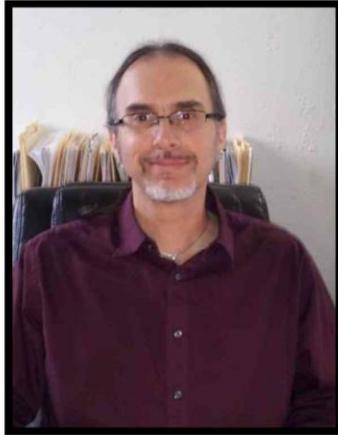
Planning Staff serves as the Coventry representative with the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee. Staff attends monthly meetings of the Committee and participates in a variety of activities sponsored by the Chamber and Committee. For example, the Committee has been involved with the coordination of the Chamber’s involvement with the ‘Lifestyles Expo’ planned for November at Star Hill in Tolland. This event allows for great exposure for the individual communities in the region as well as local businesses and services.

Subsequent to the Town’s complete renovation and improvement of its website, the Permit Technician Staff continues to work on various Land Use Office website improvements to expand the amount and nature of available information and resources that are available to the public. These improvements include expanded mapping resources available, improved Coventry Lake page and enhanced clarity for better navigation as well as more informational material to assist the web visitor.

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION – ACTIVITY LEVEL**

A comparison between FY 12/13 and 13/14 indicates that the overall number of applications remained relatively the same from the previous fiscal year.

The number of special permits and subdivisions increase slightly over the past fiscal year.



*Eric M. Trott*  
*Director of Planning and Development*



*Michael Antonellis*  
*Planning Technician/Zoning Enforcement Officer*



*Heidi A. Leech*  
*Land Use Permit Technician*

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
ACTIVITY LEVELS**

	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>12/13</b>	<b>13/14</b>	<b>APPLICATION DIFFERENCE</b>
Special Permit	Approved	7	9	+2
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	
Subdivision	Approved	2	3	+1
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	
Zone Changes	Approved	0	0	0
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	
Zoning Text Changes	Approved	1	1	0
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	
Subdivision Text Changes	Approved	0	1	+1
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	
Subdivision Amendments	Approved	0	0	0
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	
Special Permit Amendments	Approved	0	1	+1
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	
Site Plan Review	Approved	0	0	0
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	
Scenic Road Designation	Approved	0	0	0
	Denied	0	0	
	Pending	0	0	

## INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY

**Members: (As of June 30, 2014 end of fiscal year)**

<b>Darby Pollansky</b>	<b>Lori Mathieu</b>	<b>David Sorich</b>
<b>Raymond Chicoine</b>	<b>Thomas Woolf</b>	<b>Charles Clapp</b>
<b>Michael Burokas</b>		
<b>Todd Penney, PE – Town Engineer/Inland Wetlands Agent</b>		

Total number of applications considered by the Inland Wetlands Agency (IWA): **14**

- ❖ Outcome of applications:
  - Non Jurisdiction Ruling: 0
  - Permit Denials: 1
  - Permit Approvals: 13
  - Permit Extensions: 0
  - Permit Withdrawals: 0
  - Permit Modifications: 1

Total number of applications considered by the Inland Wetlands Agent: **17**

- ❖ Outcome of application:
  - Permit Denial: 0
  - Permit Denials: 0
  - Permit Approvals: 17
  - Permit Extensions: 0
  - Permit Withdrawals: 0
  - Permit Modifications: 0

Nature of activities reviewed/regulated:

- ❖ Residential subdivisions/condominium developments
- ❖ Single Family House Developments
- ❖ Main Street Sidewalk Construction Project
- ❖ Drainage improvements
- ❖ Commercial Expansion
- ❖ Other:
  - Utility work.
  - Accessory structures
  - Filling/grading

## **INLAND WETLANDS AGENT**

The Wetlands Agent serves as staff support to the IWA for their regular monthly meetings. The Agency continues to operate very efficiently under the Agent's guidance and has provided a very smooth transition in the level of service to the Agency and community at large.

The number of Inland Wetlands Agency applications decreased to **14** in FY13/14; from 18 in FY12/13. The number of Agent permits decreased to **17** in FY13/14; from 18 in FY12/13. The Agent Permit applications are administrated in a shorter time frame and with a simpler process as compared to full Wetlands Agency permits. This has proven to be a valuable option for applicants.

Highlights of the Agency applications involved a 14-lot subdivision of the Maynard Farms Nursery off Riley Mountain Road and the local permitting for the Pucker Street Bridge Rehabilitation Project. The Maynard subdivision involves the rear of the property and will construct a cul-de-sac road off of the 50 foot parcel dedicated for road use off of Woodmont Drive. The proposed activities implemented the appropriate erosion and sedimentation control for construction operation and Low Impact Design methods to managing the generation of the stormwater from the proposed impervious surfaces. A detention basin with water quality features will be owned by the Town of Coventry as it will handle the stormwater from the new cul-de-sac.

The Pucker Street Bridge Project, initiated in the early 2000's, was finally ready for the local permitting process. The project calls for the removal of the existing superstructure, but will maintain the existing abutment walls with some modification. The existing abutment walls will be used to buffer the new bridge foundation for the new superstructure. The Bridge Project was approved by the Columbia Inland Wetlands Agency as well, as half of the project is located in the Town of Columbia. The Project will receive a Flood Management Certificate from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection/Connecticut Department of Transportation. The Project is scheduled to be in construction for 2015.

There were three homes that were approved for tear down and rebuild and one new home construction on a vacant lot around Coventry Lake this year. Each of these permits was approved due to the applicant sensitivity to stormwater management prior to discharge to the lake.

I continue to work with all of the Coventry residents who need to be involved in a Wetlands permitting process. My approach to each application is consistent; help you (the applicant) navigate through the permitting requirements while maintaining the health and integrity of each wetland complex involved.



*Todd Penney, PE – Town Engineer/Wetlands Agent*

## ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

**Members: (As of June 30, 2014 end of fiscal year)**

<b>Karen Post - Chair</b>	<b>William Riordan - Secretary</b>	<b>Raymond Chicoine– Vice Chair</b>
<b>Carol Chipkin</b>	<b>Valdis Vinkels</b>	<b>Stephen Curtiss (alternate)</b>
<b>Joram Echeles (alternate)</b>	<b>JoAnn Watson (alternate)</b>	
<b>Michael Antonellis, Planning Technician/Zoning Enforcement Officer</b>		

PETITIONS: 5

Approved 5  
Denied 0  
Pending 0  
Withdrawn 0  
Appeal 0

There have been two applications to the ZBA this year. These applications involved relief of the dimensional standards on lake lots. The applications were approved by the ZBA based on a zoning hardship.

The low number of applications to the Zoning Board of Appeals likely represents the efficiency and comprehensiveness of the Zoning Regulations providing less need for variances. This may also reflect the efficacy of staff working with applicants to find creative solutions that satisfy a variety of needs.

In the last year, the variances requested reflect more significant proposed work, such as rebuilding entire homes. This seems to be the true intention of applying for zoning variances, which is to allow for a primary use for which the lot has been zoned which wouldn't otherwise be approved through staff review based on a hardship. Applications for variances on smaller projects such as decks and sheds seem to be deterred by the high cost of a ZBA hearing (legal notice publication fees) and the availability of feasible options.

**ZONING ENFORCEMENT**

*Michael Antonellis, Planning Technician/Zoning Enforcement Officer*

**ZONING PERMITS ISSUED** (Agent Approved) **224**

Single Family Dwellings	27
Condominium Units	2
Accessory Structures	94
In-law Units	1
Clubhouse	0
Residential Additions/Attached Garages	13
Home Occupations	16
Commercial Use/Signage	9
Interior Renovations	16
Agricultural Buildings	0
Other	61
Total:	<b>240*</b>

\*Total differs due to more than one item proposed on a zoning permit.

**CERTIFICATES OF USE AND OCCUPANCY** **42**

(Signed for zoning compliance by ZEO)

Single Family Dwellings	20
Condominium/Adult Community	1
In-law Units	0
Accessory Uses – Building and Structures	17
Residential Additions/Attached Garages	4
Commercial Signage	0
Agricultural Structures	0
Outdoor Wood-burning Furnace	0
Home Occupation	0
Total:	<b>42*</b>

\*Total differs due to more than one permit included on single C.O.

ZONING INSPECTIONS

Erosion and Sediment Control	27
Limits of Clearing	0
Certificates of Occupancy	40
Pre-Approval Inspection	10
Seed & Mulch/Grading – Bond Release	6
Zoning Complaints (see breakdown)	25
Blight Complaints	44
Street Number Assignment	1
Other	0
Total:	<b>153</b>

VIOLATION ENFORCEMENT INSPECTIONS (Initial Inspections Only):

The following is a breakdown of the types of inspections made by the Zoning Enforcement Officer in response to written, signed complaints lodged by citizens for potential zoning and blight violations.

Erosion and sedimentation, outdoor wood-burning furnaces, and drainage complaints associated with poor grading are investigated expediently by the PT/ZEO due to their potential impact on the environment, and possible harm to citizens and private property.

	# of Complaints Investigated
Erosion and Sediment Control	1
Drainage	8
Permit Conditions Not Met	0
Non-Permitted Activity or Structure	10
Signage	0
Illegal Dumping/Oil Spills	1
Clearing/Filling	1
Junk Yard	0
Greater than 1 Unregistered Vehicle	2
Unlicensed motor vehicle dealer/repair	1
Outdoor wood burning furnace	0
Residential motor vehicle sales	1
Blight	21
Total:	<b>*46</b>

\*Listed are INITIAL inspections only. Additional inspections are commonly required to ensure compliance with the Regulations.

Zoning complaint inspections have decreased. This trend may be attributed to the fact that more complaints are now submitted as blight complaints as of recently. However it seems that blight complaints may be leveling off. Additionally, although complaints have decreased, staff involvement and enforcement efforts have increased. As older, longer term enforcement matters have come to fruition there has been an increase in contact with the Town Attorney’s office and partnership with the

State Housing Prosecutor to help resolve these matters. It seems that as of recently there has been more utilization by the public of the nuisance regulation. This has created more work by staff to help resolve the moving target of a nuisance claim, mostly because a nuisance is difficult to quantify.

What these numbers do not reflect are conversations with residents about possible complaints. Before a resident submits a complaint zoning staff tries to emphasize neighborly discourse as to avoid contentious situations with neighbors before town staff becomes involved. Often time's issues can be resolved if parties are willing to cooperate.



## **OTHER PROJECTS:**

### Mill Brook Greenway

Planning and Zoning staff was charged with identifying a corridor through the Village area along the Millbrook River for the potential use of extending a trail greenway through town. The proposed trail would connect Patriot Park to the larger, regional, Willimantic River Greenway. ZEO/PT was able to use GIS to identify areas along the Millbrook which would be most suitable for the introduction of a trail. By evaluation topography, wetlands, proximity to Millbrook, shortest distances between town-owned parcels, in addition to other information. A public forum was held to obtain public opinion about the proposed Greenway and evaluate the level of support from the community.

### Route 6 DOT Parcels

CT DOT has recently expressed interest in the possibility of releasing ownership of old expressway parcels to the towns they are in. This has generated the need to evaluate what DOT claims they own versus what Coventry's records indicate. Through GIS analysis, land records research, and the help of CRCOG, staff has been able to reach a majority of agreement as to which parcels would be involved in a transfer of land if it were to occur. This process and discussions with DOT and CRCOG are ongoing.

### Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Zoning Staff serves on the GIS user group which meets regularly to discuss better ways to integrate GIS and maximize on its capacity. ZEO/PT regularly uses GIS to perform a variety of duties and meet the demands of several departments within town hall including, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Town Manager, DPW, and not the least of which is the Land Use Department. As the need grows for GIS the ZEO/PT is able to utilize their skills to a more full extent, which benefits town hall as well as the community.

### Switch to CRCOG

ZEO/PT has been in charge of the integration into the online services provided by CRCOG. ZEO/PT has been in contact with both CRCOG and their vendor AppGeo to provide data and assist in the integration of online services. ZEO/PT has coordinated the transfer of mapping data and geodatabase data so AppGeo can provide parcel updates, so Coventry can benefit from having record or updated boundary lines throughout town.

### Economic Development

ZEO/PT has been serving as staff to an EDC subcommittee committed to providing newly drafted regulations for the purpose of establishing a Wayfinding Sign program throughout town. This program would provide businesses that don't have the benefit of being located in a highly visible area the opportunity to direct traffic towards their business. Also, the ZEO/PT was able to provide a short narrative on income equality within the town as it relates to the county and state as a whole. By utilizing existing resources like the Census, this was easily obtainable and summarized into a short memorandum which explained the use of certain information linked with income inequality. The memo's findings included that Coventry has a low occurrence of income inequality, and income is fairly uniform throughout the town in comparison to the state as a whole.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**Members: (As of June 30, 2014 end of fiscal year)**

<b>Sondra Astor Stave</b>	<b>Bill Jobbagy</b>	<b>Roberta Wilmot</b>
<b>Timothy Liptrap</b>	<b>Barbara Barry</b>	<b>Richard Giggey</b>
<b>Mark Lavitt</b>	<b>Sam Belsito</b>	<b>Carol Polsky</b>
<b>Eric M. Trott, Director of Planning and Development</b>		
<b>John Elsesser, Town Manager</b>		

Coventry's Economic Development Commission (EDC) continued their efforts to attract new business appropriate for the community while supporting existing business and tourism efforts. The EDC recognizes that economic development requires a long-term commitment to create a positive atmosphere to attract appropriate development proposals.

A member of the EDC continues to revise and improve a 'New Business Primer' education resource for the business community. The primer is a 'one-stop-shop' source of information on what is required and recommended to start or expand a business. This resource is distributed to new home occupation businesses to assist them in their 'start ups'. The member also is involved with the Northeast CT Economic Alliance a regional business financing source that supports small business development.

The same member of the EDC also serves as a Committee volunteer with The Last Green Valley. This offers a link between the Town and an important regional organization that assists with grant funding, education and other vital resources.

A member of the EDC continues to be involved with the operation of the Visitor's Center, which serves as a business, cultural and civic information resource for the Town and the region. The Visitor's Center is being operated solely by the efforts of the volunteers. The Commission and Staff have recently discussed new opportunities to encourage visibility and expand the volunteer support of the Visitor's Center. One idea that is likely to be implemented involves working with the artist community to provide showcase space at the Visitor's Center in exchange for staffing it and greeting visitors.

The EDC continues to strongly support the efforts of the Coventry Farmer's Market. The Market was moved to the Hale Family Homestead in 2008 and has proven to be extremely successful and a significant economic development feature which supports the local agricultural and small business community as well. The Commission continues to consider ways in which the visitor's of the Market can be connected to the other businesses in Town in order to further support the local economy.

The EDC hosted a regional forum about the ongoing work at UCONN to establish the Tech Park. A representative from UCONN's Tech Park team spoke to the audience about the specifics of the project. This was an important event that provided those in attendance with a clear idea of the significance of the project and the development implications to the Town.

The EDC hosted a regional economic development forum with the Economic Development Commission's in the region. The goal of the forum was to share information, tools that the towns employ to assist in business attraction and retention and understand how the EDCs can work better in a

cooperative fashion. The event was very successful and will likely lead to others that can be hosted in neighboring communities.

The EDC met with the new business advisor with the Small Business Development Center located at UCONN. The Center recently re-opened and they are reaching out to the region to find ways to support the economic development needs. The Center provides a wide range of assistance to small businesses on a one to one environment.

The EDC hosted a small business forum to advocate the CT Energy Financing Investment Authority's new CPACE program. The program offers financial support to allow for energy efficiency improvement with businesses.

Members of the EDC are serving on a subcommittee that is examining the potential of the Town allowing for 'wayfinding' signage for the business community. The goal is to determine a method to permit and install small signage at street intersections to assist customers to find businesses that are located off of main roads in town. The final recommendations will be made to the Steering Committee for the Town Council to consider.

The EDC hosted a public forum on how new wastewater treatment technology can assist in facilitating economic development projects by either addressing existing problems with a septic system or solve issues for new development. The Commission invited the owner of Geomatrix, from Old Saybrook, CT who has a long history of providing solutions to businesses and services in New England.

Planning Staff and the EDC have developed and maintains a commercial property target development list that serves as an important quick reference resource that identifies key locations in Town that have economic development potential. The list describes the benefits of the site and potential compatible uses that could be considered on each.

The EDC continues to revise and update the Town's economic development brochure/business listing to maintain its relevance and accuracy. This marketing piece is a simple, yet effective way to identify the local businesses and provide a quick reference that can be easily offered to the public at various visible locations in Town.

Planning Staff continues to work with Water Pollution Control Staff, DEEP and State of CT Office of Policy and Management to promote the expansion of the Bolton sewers into Coventry to address wastewater and economic development needs on RTE 44 near the town line. In addition, Staff remains vigilant in its efforts to satisfy the concerns of DEEP Staff relative to sewer service area expansions in this area.

In an effort to maintain open communication with businesses in the community, the EDC has made efforts to meet one on one with several businesses at the Commission level. The goal is to better understand the needs of the businesses and determine how the Commission can assist. The meetings have been helpful for both parties by sharing information and insight into small business support.

The EDC continues to discuss and provide support to various businesses seeking approvals from the Planning and Zoning Commission. The EDC often serves as the 'business cheerleader' or advocate to assist in the processing of an application.

# OFFICE OF CONSERVATION COMMISSION

To: John Elsesser Town Manager

From: Coventry Conservation Commission: Leroy A. Lowe Jr., Chairman; Art Hall Vice Chairman Bob Proctor, Sec./Treas.; Paul Manzone, Vincent Messino.

Date: October 3, 2014

Subject: 2013/2014 Annual Report

The Coventry Conservation Commission has been busy this past year, as this report will show.

## Bike Plan and Routes

The commission is working on establishing a Bike Plan and routes for the town. The commission has established a frame work for the bike plan. To date the commission has five (5) bike routes with more to come.

## Site Plan and Town Referrals

1. 13-10, June Maynard, 337 Riley Mountain Rd. subdivision, 97.36 acres (14 lots).
2. 13-10, June Maynard, 337 Riley Mountain Rd. subdivision, 97.36 acres (14 lots). Mr. Bushnell will attend meeting for discussion on subdivision (9-11-13)..
3. The commission walked the White property, 36 Cooper Lane, at 9:00 a.m., Sunday September 29, 2013 for possible open space dedication.
5. 13-25W John Luetjen, 113 Woodland Road, single family residential reconstruction of existing structure.
6. 14-03S Richard Wamner, 223 Woodland Rd. Remove existing house and garage and construct new house and garage in two phases.

The commission reviewed and made comments on these site plans and town referrals. This information was sent to the town staff and other agencies for their review and comments.

## Workshops

None

## Adopt-A-Road Program

As always the program is running smoothly with the support of the Land use Office and the Department of Public Works.

## Items of general interest

1. We submit items to the town newsletter.
2. We hold elections of officers.
3. We submit a new budget each year.
4. We participate in land use commission consortium meetings hosted by the Coventry Town Council.
5. We submit commission agendas and meeting minutes. Information flyers and postings are available for review on a commission-sponsored bulletin board in the town hall.

The Coventry Conservation Commission Worked on the following items of Special interest.

1. The conservation commission sponsored a Stonewall Cleanup Day, members of the conservation commission cleaned up the stone wall at the Nathan Hall Homestead (adjacent to the farmers market and parking area). This has become an annual event held on the last weekend in March.
2. The conservation commission walked the White property for open space evaluation.
3. Discussion on adopting the completed trails brochures. After review no changes needed.
4. The conservation commission cleaned up Daly Rd. for Earth Day cleanup. This would be a yearly event.
- 5 The commission reviewed Millbrook Greenway Phase II mapping
- 6 The conservation commission participated in a special meeting on the Millbrook Greenway Extension 2-20-14

The Coventry Conservation Commission would like to thank the town staff for its assistance and guidance in helping us accomplish many of our projects throughout the year.

I would like to thank the members of the Conservation Commission for their dedication and hard work throughout the year.

Respectfully Submitted

Leroy A. Lowe Jr.  
Chairman