

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
March 14, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Present: President Gary Cote, Ted Jendzejec, Raymond Spear

Town Manager Thomas Hoover
Town Solicitor Frederick Tobin

Absent: Vice President Kerry McGee

Pledge of Allegiance led by Coventry Police Honor Guard
Invocation by Rev. Auld of Summit Baptist Church
Review of Emergency Evacuation Plan

President's Comments

President Cote, members of the Town Council and Town Manager Hoover participated in the West Warwick St. Patrick's Day parade. President Cote remarked that he enjoyed spending time with council members in a social setting, getting to know each other a little better. He reminded citizens that this Town Council will do the best it can for the taxpayers.

Approval of Town Council Minutes – February 28, 2011

Motion made by Councilman Spear seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to approve minutes. All voted Aye.

CEREMONY – Coventry Police Promotions

President Cote administered oath of office to newly promoted officers: Captain David Tomasso, Lt. John Shields and Sgt. Bryan Ricci.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Regarding certification of the Coventry High School by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)

Coventry High School Principal Michael Hobin presented New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC) report, which awarded continued accreditation to the high school. In the report, NEASC noted 41 commendations along with 33 recommendations for our schools. (Full NEASC report can be found in Town Council folder and on the Coventry School Department web page).

We were reviewed in the categories of mission and expectations, curriculum, instruction, assessment, leadership and organization, school resources for learning and community resources for learning.

In preparation for our 2008 NEASC visit, six specific items were identified: new roof, improved athletic facilities, new auditorium seating, technology maintenance budget and plan, another AP/Dean, time and resources. After our Nov. 2010 NEASC review, we were faced with most of the same recommendations, including the fire code upgrade.

Although in September 2010 NEASC voted to award the school continued accreditation and gave us some great commendations, although there were 23 significant concerns in the areas of curriculum and community resources for learning. NEASC has placed us on warning and we will remain on warning until all 23 of those concerns are addressed. If enough progress isn't made, our status will change to probationary, which would effect the school's reputation.

We have been given a timeline and are working on curriculum issues now; NEASC should be satisfied with our work in that area. We need help with the big ticket items such as replacing outdated equipment and facility concerns.

President Cote questioned if anything had been addressed since 2008, as the 2010 list appears to be the same. Principal Hobin responded that he had been hopeful that he would be able to incorporate some of these issues into the bond referendum, but that was defeated.

President Cote asked Mr. Hobin if he had considered donations, stating that the West Greenwich High School track was completed with 95% donations. Mr. Hobin replied that nothing has been initiated, they are just getting their hands around the NEASC report at this

point but he is open to suggestions. President Cote reminded him that the taxpayers are already very stretched and Council has been informed by the School Committee that they will need \$1.6 million next year just for contractual obligations.

Councilman Jendzejec asked if there were other accreditations that would take place within the ten year period. Mr. Hobin replied that the last one was done in 2006 by the Dept. of Education.

Councilman Spear added that it is crucial to keep accreditation. If the fire alarm isn't fixed, they won't be able to open the high school in September. The report puts our School Committee and administration on warning that things need to be done or we lose a very necessary part of the high school program, the accreditation. Councilman Spear suggested a list of priorities be submitted, what is the most crucial and what approach they feel should be taken with each one of them, then we can see how many come back on our shoulders.

President Cote advised that the Council is exploring the chance of a bond referendum, but there are no answers yet. Council will keep Superintendent Convery informed.

2. The Pawtuxet Valley Chamber of Commerce on the expenditures made through the agreement with the Town of Coventry for economic development assistance to new and existing businesses

Chamber President Greg Laboissonniere was unavailable to make a presentation this evening as he was called out of town for business. He offered to make himself available at the March 28 Town Council meeting.

Councilman Jendzejec requested the presentation be on the March 28 agenda to further discuss where \$12,000 of taxpayer money went. After listening to how much money the schools need, I think that the \$12,000 donation to the Chamber of Commerce could go a long way to start fixing some of the school's needs.

Councilman Jendzejec made motion seconded by Councilman Spear to table Chamber of Commerce presentation. All voted aye

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of February 2011 Tax Abatements and Additions

Motion by Councilman Spear seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to approve Consent Agenda. All voted aye.

Licenses

1. Application by David Thatcher for Private Detective license

Manager Hoover advised that application is in order. Motion made by Councilman Spear seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to approve license application. All voted aye.

Resolutions

1. Reappointing Frank Perry to the Coventry Board of Canvassers

Solicitor Tobin advised that RI Law requires before an official appointment may be made on the Board of Canvassers, a list of five candidates is requested from political party chairpersons.

Since this procedure was not followed, a motion was made by Councilman Spear seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to table resolution until a list is obtained. All voted aye.

2. Approving a lease with T-Mobile Northeast for the placement of antenna facilities on an existing Town owned tower at the Coventry High School

IT Director Ed Warzycha explained that T-Mobile wants to lease space on the high school cell tower. In one year \$27,000 revenue would be generated for the school department; thirty years would amount to \$1,300,000. This particular tower generates money for the school department; the tower at DPW will generate revenue for the town.

Councilman Jendzejec asked if School Committee Chairperson Kathy Patenaude had been informed of the situation with the cell tower. Mr. Warzycha stated he hadn't contacted the School

Committee, although Manager Hoover confirmed he had discussed this with Superintendent Convery. Councilman Jendzejec asked that in the future the School Committee is notified.

Motion made by Councilman Spear seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to approve antenna installation. All voted aye.

3. Establishing a Traffic Calming Committee

Councilman Jendzejec suggested the formation of a Traffic Calming Commission with the intent to reduce speed, enhance pedestrian safety and reduce traffic in residential neighborhoods. The committee would be comprised of seven members (two citizens, a council person, the public works superintendent, planning director, town engineer and police chief.)

He remarked that after campaigning last fall, he came across numerous occasions where there were traffic cut-thrus, high school traffic, problem spots around the Johnson's Blvd. and Hopkins Hill School area. It is time to become pro-active, cut the traffic down or slow the traffic down. He has done extensive research on the subject of traffic calming commissions and chose to model Coventry's committee after Newton, CT. He explained that the committee would be an advisory committee to the Town Council, but I believe it allows for more transparency, allowing the public to become more involved.

Police Chief Volpe indicated that there are some good points and he welcomes a meeting to see where Council wants to go with this.

Councilman Spear added that we need a clear and concise statement of purpose.

Manager Hoover referred to Paragraph 1 of his memo to Council members, where he states the intent of the Traffic Calming Committee will be to utilize measures to reduce speed, enhance pedestrian safety and reduce traffic diversion in residential neighborhoods.

In addition, Councilman Jendzejec added that since Route 3 will undergo construction this summer, there will probably be more cut-thru traffic throughout the neighborhoods.

Motion made by Councilman Jendzejec seconded by Councilman Spear to approve resolution. All voted Aye.

4. Awarding a contract for vehicle maintenance at the Coventry Police Department

Chief Volpe explained that after receiving three competitive bids, it was clear that Two Guys Auto would be our selection. In addition, they have fleet experience, have worked for us before and are trustworthy.

Motion was made by Councilman Spear seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to approve resolution awarding bid to Two Guys Auto. All voted Aye.

5. Approving an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service for a grant of \$87,675 to be matched by the Town of Coventry's \$10,855 for erosion mediation on the Pawtuxet River in the area of Sandy Bottom Road, associated with the March 2010 flood event

Manager Hoover explained that actually this is a larger grant, the title is wrong on the agenda. The total cost is \$100,030 of which we have to pay 10%, all relating back to the floods in the spring of 2010. We spent a lot of time and energy cleaning up, got federal reimbursement funding of 90%. Then came the mitigation phase and we have applied to federal and state agencies to get money to do various things to prevent flooding in the future. The Dept. of Agriculture and Conservation are continuing to come through with funds, but unfortunately we only had about three days notice on this grant. We hope that our 10% match can be done mostly with in-kind work by DPW, such as debris removal, hauling, or whatever.

President Cote clarified that the state contribution would be \$89,025 and the town not to exceed \$11,005 for remediation of that property, which property is located at the Sandy Bottom Bridge.

Paul Sprague, Planning Director, has applied for a grant related to flood damages from March 2010. The proposal will mitigate the risk of future flooding. Our share has been reduced from 25% to 10%, as the manager urged our congressional delegation for that reduction, which is typically 75/25.

Motion made by Councilman Spear seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to approve resolution. All voted Aye.

PUBLIC COMMENT

School Committee Member Nancy Sprengelmeyer requested that the School Committee is notified if the Traffic Calming Committee has a concern with an area surrounding a school.

Judy Liner, School Committee member, invited Council to tour some of the school's buildings, sometimes it helps to see what you are dealing with (referring to Mr. Hobin's presentation)

Motion made by Councilman Spear seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to adjourn meeting. All voted aye. Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Town Clerk