

Town Council Meeting  
April 13, 2015

WORK SESSION – 6:00 PM

Town FY 2015/2016 and School Department FY 2015/2016 Budget Review

Present: School Committee Chairperson Katherine Patenaude, School Committee members David Florio, Donna Kalunian, James Pierson, Ann Dickson, Attorney Katie Duncanson and Superintendent Michael Almeida

Present: Town Council President Glen Shibley, Councilmembers Kerry McGee, Tammy Duxbury, Karen Carlson, Greg Laboissonniere, Solicitor Nicholas Gorham and Town Manager Hoover

Dr. Almeida provided additional materials, as previously requested, pertaining to out of district tuitions and purchased services.

Councilman McGee remarked that he attended a School Committee meeting last week, and there is a big “push” on for ROTC. He believes it is worth the effort, is a worthwhile program and wants to make sure that we are doing all we can to save this program. He asked Dr. Almeida whether there has been an honest opportunity to recruit for ROTC.

Dr. Almeida responded that Mrs. Ferguson has made numerous visits to the middle school along with other districts. However, there is some animosity toward recruitment for this program as some other districts don't want their students to come to Coventry, then that district has to pay. Some won't even provide us with a list of their 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade class so that we can send out information. Career and tech recruiting needs to be done differently, maybe on a statewide website, and not make it a recruitment effort.

Councilman McGee also asked to clarify the total number of students in the program. He was told there were 66 in the program, but heard from parents that the actual number is 88, unless there is a difference between full and semester students. Dr. Almeida responded that for Air Force purposes, it is only those 66 students in the full time career path that count. The other 19 students take semester class, it is not a career path and therefore do not count toward the 100 student requirement.

Councilwoman Carlson asked about out of district students in other programs at the vo tech and Dr. Almeida replied that he cannot speak to why students are or are not coming to Coventry Career and Tech for ROTC. However, Exeter/West Greenwich is no longer in our region, they are in Chariho, and our region now goes north for the most part. It is difficult to bring students in to Coventry from the northern districts.

After much discussion about out of district tuition, Councilwoman Carlson asked for revenue information from the vocational career center in order to figure out the cost per student. Dr. Almeida responded that the Director is working on that information, it is not yet complete. You will be able to figure the cost per student, but there are a lot of variables that play into it.

She asked at what point a decision is made whether a vo tech program is worth it and when it gets to a point where it might not be cost effective. Dr. Almeida said that this year they are actually looking at the carpentry program specifically for that reason.

Councilman McGee asked if we are mandated by the state to pay the out of district tuitions and Dr. Almeida replied that everything you see on the listing of the Out of District Tuition Detail is required. Councilwoman Carlson asked how many students are included in the Kent Center amount of \$328,865. Cheryl Gooding, Special Education Director, advised that there are 27 students in special education out of district programs. Some students are DCYF placements which we have no control over and others are placed because we place them when what they need is beyond what we are able to do in the district.

Councilwoman Duxbury supports the ROTC program and asked why last year the school funded ROTC without an increase from the town, but not this year. Also, how many instructors did ROTC have this year? Dr. Almeida stated that two instructors are required; however, we had one full time instructor, added an additional class to his schedule, and paid him 20% above his salary to take on the class.

Ms. Duxbury hopes that the members of the School Committee who ran for reelection and supported ROTC are actively looking for dollars within the school budget for funding. It appears that this program is becoming a wedge between the Town Council and School Committee. It is not on the

backs of the Town Council if this doesn't get funded. The School Department also has to take ownership of this if the Town Council doesn't give any funding.

Discussion turned to purchased services and Councilwoman Duxbury wanted to clarify that the actual audited costs are what appear in column 13-14, the column 14-15 is where we are now, and 15-16 is going forward. If I look at this correctly, there is an increase of about \$736,000 in purchased services. She asked why bus assistants/monitors, etc. are increasing, as it is a big number.

There was lengthy, detailed discussion with School Finance Director D'Amico on the purchased service analysis with regard to the 2013-14 audited column, 15-16 school committee approved budget, out of district tuition, the contractual cost of bus transportation and mandate for monitors, with bus transportation and out of district tuition being the biggest budget drivers. Councilman Laboissonniere asked if there is a difference between bus assistants and monitors. Dr. Almeida said it is the same thing and still mandated by the state. We do have a waiver to relinquish some of it, for example in Western Coventry we drop off door to door, so we have a waiver for some of the monitors.

When asked about the increase in professional development training, Dr. Almeida said that with the transition from NECAP to PARCC, common core, science standards, there is an incredible amount of professional development that needs to happen including retraining and providing teachers with guidance and strategies at every single grade level.

Councilwoman Carlson asked why there was an increase from \$101,000 to \$118,000, a \$17,000 increase, under the School Committee, page 1 of 11 subtotal under school board. Dr. Almeida said there were a couple of reasons, one being a consultation regarding modular classrooms and capacity for all day K and asking for an RFP for a kindergarten study,

Councilwoman Carlson asked if the position of RTI is mandated by the state; Dr. Almeida replied that it is not, but it is a huge job and ideally you would probably have multiple people involved in this. She asked again if the Town Council were to give money specifically for ROTC, whether it would go to ROTC.

Manager Hoover asked for the position of the Air Force with regard to ROTC and if it is funded for next fiscal year and any other year thereafter for that matter. Would there be automatic funding? Dr. Almeida advised that in his conversation with an official from the Air Force that there is a waiting list and after two years of successfully having 100 students enrolled, we could apply for funding. If funding is granted, it would be \$60,000 to offset the cost, but he said it is highly unlikely to restore funding based on their own limited funds. Manager Hoover stated that it appears the Air Force is really out of this as far as funding and Dr. Almeida agreed, however, they still have requirements.

Severance packages were discussed for early retirees. Dr. Almeida said that the \$225,000 severance package has been calculated into contract negotiations. Finance Director D'Amico explained further that they can't calculate exactly since they do not know exactly who is retiring and who will be hired to replace that person, but he figures that with about 13 retirements with an average savings of \$30,000 per salary, there would certainly be a cost savings, and again next year with another eight or nine retiring, the savings would certainly outweigh the severance.

Councilwoman Carlson asked about the cost of the Raptor security system; Dr. Almeida replied there was a \$1500 start up cost, then \$430 per school for maintenance.

Councilman McGee stated that each person on the Town Council is concerned about education. Unfortunately, we have had critical times the last few years, especially with the high ARC payments. We would like to fund every dime you ask for, but we are still fixing problems from the last 20 years. Maybe we'll get a little reprieve next year, but I know we have level funded you in the past, and we want to do everything in our power to keep costs down for the taxpayers one more year. I hope that you will do what you can.

President Shibley agreed that money is tough and education is important. He finds it difficult with all the millions the school department is asking for, and all the programs that you run, the only e mails I have been receiving are in regard to the ROTC program, not educational concerns, not about textbooks, not parochial schools, just the funding of ROTC. Of your \$67 million budget, that funding can't be found? It is a dilemma if we don't give the money, then the Town Council "ended" the program; if we do find the money and the Air Force ends the program, then the Town Council doesn't get the money back. He encouraged the School Committee to find the money.

Dr. Almeida said of the entire \$67 million budget, there is a very small percentage which is

discretionary, most is contractual and tied to contracts, employees or vendors. I don't want to see the ROTC program go either. You asked me what if the program was discontinued, what would we do with the \$250,000. If left up to me it would go to offset the costs of all day K, which would reduce our request by \$250,000. Ultimately, the School Committee makes that decision.

President Shibley stated that contracts can be adjusted, broken, or revised. Dr. Almeida responded that in the last 8 months they have renegotiated the SRP pension, the teachers contract, the busing contract and life insurance. We have already dug deep into the contracts.

Senator Kettle and Representative Sherry Roberts both offered to help find a solution, offered help to find \$250,000; it is a worthwhile program.

A motion was made by Donna Kalunian seconded by Ann Dickson to close work session. All voted Aye.

A motion was made by Councilman McGee seconded by Councilwoman Carlson to adjourn work session. All voted aye.

#### TOWN COUNCIL MEETING – 7:00 PM

Present: Town Council President Glen Shibley, Councilmembers Kerry McGee, Tammy Duxbury, Karen Carlson, Greg Laboissonniere, Solicitor Gorham and Town Manager Hoover

Pledge of Allegiance  
Invocation  
Review of Emergency Evacuation Plan

#### President's Comments

Congratulations to the PC Friars for winning the National Collegiate Hockey Championship.

#### Approval of Town Council minutes March 23 and March 30, 2015

Councilman McGee noted a correction on Page 5 of the March 23 minutes where he was referred to as "Vice-President McGee"; should be changed to Councilman McGee.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Carlson seconded by Councilwoman Duxbury to approve minutes from March 23 with correction and March 30, 2015. All voted aye.

#### Proclaiming April 24, 2015 in the Town of Coventry as Recognition of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian Genocide Day and moment of silence

A proclamation was presented to Steven Elmasian of the Armenian National Committee of RI, marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

#### COUNCIL DISTRICT UPDATES

Councilman McGee from District 3 had no news to report; Councilwoman Duxbury from District 5 asked to have the planning and zoning minutes up to date on the website and in addition asked when automated trash pickup would begin townwide (Manager Hoover responded after Labor Day)

Councilwoman Carlson from District 1 thanked Stacy O'Gorman for her help with the Celebrate Coventry website. She also asked the public for any pictures or stories that anyone would like to contribute for the website.

District 2 Councilman Laboissonniere remarked that the town needs to address an issue in his district with a development called the Oaks. The developer and the town are in disagreement about the road being up to standard and this issue needs to be addressed as more people are moving in and require services.

President Shibley, District 4, advised that there is work being done in his district on a new small business coming into town, Filippou's Pizza. Work is also being done on the former Nino's property and that should be up and running in June.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Senator Nicholas Kettle, 5 Autumn Ridge Road, wanted to make sure that the Town Council

is aware of a bill in the Senate, introduced by Senator McCaffrey and being pushed by a special interest group of builders, creating a moratorium on impact fees and allow the town not to tax new housing for a year. Just want to make sure you are aware of this, could have negative impact on the town.

Manager Hoover added that he is on the board of the RI League of Cities and Towns and for the last couple of years, the General Assembly has brought these bills forward and the former governor vetoed them. I don't know what will happen this year, but can tell you that we are all against these bills and encourage the Council to bring a resolution in opposition.

Richard Reynolds, Village Green, Coventry, suggested that the town reduce taxes in this over 55 community because they do not receive services such as snow plowing or trash pickup. It is within the Council's power to do something about this. Manager Hoover will look further into the situation.

## CONSENT AGENDA

### 1. Discussion and resulting action on renewal application for Private Detective license by David Cross

A motion was made by Councilwoman Carlson seconded by Councilman Laboissonniere to approve license renewal. All voted aye.

### 2. Discussion and resulting action on tax abatements and additions for March 2015

A motion was made by Councilwoman Carlson seconded by Councilwoman Duxbury to approve abatements and additions. All voted aye.

## LICENSES

### 1. Application for new victualling license by Shiv Shankar Foods, LLC dba Subway, located at 650 Centre of New England Blvd.

Applicant Satyam Patel, was present. Manager Hoover commented that there were no issues with the building, zoning or police departments and recommended approval. A motion was made by Councilman McGee seconded by Councilman Laboissonniere to approve new license. All voted aye.

Manager Hoover stated that the next two items, No. 2 and No. 3, have been withdrawn by the applicant.

### 2. Application by Airport Road Development Inc. for 90 day hawker license at 1320 Main Street

### 3. Application by Airport Road Development Inc. for 90 day hawker license at 792 Tiogue Avenue

## RESOLUTIONS

### 1. Discussion and resulting action on appointing Julie Stefanik to the expired term on the Coventry Board of Canvassers

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilwoman Carlson to appoint Julie Stefanik. All voted Aye.

### 2. Discussion and resulting action on appointing George Glover III and Evelyn Inman as Alternate Members of the Coventry Board of Canvassers

President Shibley said this is the first time that Coventry has appointed alternates to the Board of Canvassers and he thinks it is a good idea.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Carlson seconded by Councilman Laboissonniere to appoint George Glover III and Evelyn Inman. All voted aye.

3. Discussion and resulting action supporting Senate Bill 2015-S 0172 amending Section 42-128-8.1 of the Rhode Island General Laws in Chapter 42-128 supporting the inclusion of mobile homes as defined in paragraph 31-44.2-2 as affordable housing in accordance with the "Low and Moderate Income Housing Act"

Town Planner Paul Sprague explained the town is required to maintain a level of 10% low and moderate income housing. Under the RI Housing Act we have until 2025 to achieve that 10%, but still have a long way to go. This act will include mobile homes in the calculation of low and moderate income housing. We have 758 now and are short 650. If this bill passes we will exceed the required 10%.

Solicitor Gorham said this is one of the first bills he sponsored when he was in the General Assembly, it is long overdue and would be huge for Coventry. The town has actually met the burden for low/moderate income housing, but the way it is now, the law does not recognize it.

A motion was made by Councilman McGee seconded by Councilman Laboissonniere to approve resolution. All voted aye.

4. Discussion and resulting action opposing House Bill 5847 which empowers the State of Rhode Island to determine 'who' gets a municipal waters mooring, 'when' they get it and 'what they will pay for it

Councilwoman Carlson explained that this bill determines who gets municipal water moorings. My point is "don't take the rights away from boaters". House Bill 5847 determines who gets municipal waters moorings. This will create more state bureaucracy, and they also want to create a state marine safety patrol consisting of political appointees.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Carlson seconded by Councilman Laboissonniere to approve resolution. All voted aye.

5. Discussion and resulting action on awarding a contract to DiPrete Engineering of Cranston

Planning Director Paul Sprague explained that this resolution allows us to engage a surveyor to conduct a Class 1 survey on a 48.5 acre parcel of land in central Coventry, known as the Grote property. This property abuts the greenway and is located at the terminus of Ledge Road. There were two bidders and DiPrete Engineering was the low bidder at \$12,900.

A motion was made by Vice-President Carlson seconded by Councilman Laboissonniere to approve resolution. All voted aye

6. Discussion and resulting action on awarding a contract to Southworth-Milton, Inc. of Milford, MA for a used backhoe for the Department of Public Works at a cost of \$60,000, with trade-in

Public Works Director McGee explained that this backhoe will replace a 1987 backhoe that needs repair beyond its existing value. We sent out three bids and received only one response. Funding for the backhoe will come from the infrastructure bond funds.

Councilwoman Duxbury commented that she would really feel more comfortable if there were more bidders and wonders why more people don't bid. Mr. McGee replied that he sent out three invitations and also advertised in the paper. When you are looking for quality used equipment, there is a limited amount out there. Southwest Milton is the only dealer for used CAT equipment. Normally we only deal with John Deere and Southworth Milton. The local dealer on Jefferson Blvd. didn't have what we needed, so they didn't bid. There were only two other vendors that have the CAT equipment.

A motion was made by Councilman McGee seconded by Vice-President Carlson to approve resolution. All voted aye.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Transfer of liquor license from Madeline's Family Restaurant, LLC, 915 Tiogue Avenue to Filippou's Twisted Pizzeria Coventry, Inc. with new victualling and live show licenses

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Vice-President Carlson to open public hearing. All voted aye.

Mr. Steven Filippou of School Street, North Kingstown was present and explained to the Town Council that he has had over 40 years experience, currently operating other establishments in Exeter,

Warwick and East Greenwich. There are also two establishments in Georgia. Additionally, he is requesting to upgrade the liquor license from a B Ltd to a full B. This restaurant has a seating capacity of approximately 100 people.

Manager Hoover commented that should the Council grant these licenses, it would have to be subject to receipt of a good standing certificate from the RI Division of Taxation along with Board of Health approval.

A motion was made by Councilman McGee seconded by Councilwoman Duxbury to close public hearing. All voted aye.

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilman McGee to approve, subject to good standing certificate and approval of the Board of Health. All voted Aye.

2. Amending Zoning Ordinance Article 6, Table 6-1, Section B Agricultural Uses

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Vice-President Carlson to open public hearing. All voted aye.

Solicitor Gorham explained that the Town Council asked him to prepare an amendment to the zoning ordinance reflecting the right of patient card holders in Coventry to cultivate their own medical marijuana, for their own medicinal purposes only. That is what this does, and it has been clarified that no one else can cultivate it.

However, the Planning Board has not voted on this yet, and the law requires that they have a chance to make some findings and suggestions to the Town Council. What I would recommend is to close the public hearing, then we can plan to have consideration on the amendment at the next Town Council meeting. The Planning Board is ready to take this up at their next meeting.

A motion was made by Councilman McGee seconded by Councilman Laboissonniere to close public hearing. All voted aye.

A motion was made by Vice-President Carlson seconded by Councilwoman Duxbury to adjourn meeting. All voted aye.

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Town Clerk