

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
November 22, 2010

Present: President Raymond Spear, Vice-President Laura Flanagan, Glen Shibley, Kenneth Cloutier, Frank Hyde

Town Manager Thomas Hoover  
Asst. Town Solicitor Mark Freel

Presentation of Colors by Coventry Police Honor Guard  
National Anthem sung by Mariah Harrington  
Invocation by Pastor Chris Baker of Knotty Oak Baptist Church  
Review of Emergency Evacuation Plan

President's Comments

President Spear remarked that he looks forward to continuing his service on the Town Council. He requested that the new Town Council takes a look at the goals that were established previously, take an assessment of where we stand on those now and establish a new set of goals and objectives for this Council.

Councilman Shibley commented that he has enjoyed working with the Town Council for the past two years and feels a lot has been accomplished, especially with no tax increase for the last two years.

Proclamations

President Spear recognized Senators Leonidas Raptakis and Leo Blais for their years of dedicated service to the State of Rhode Island and Town of Coventry. Also receiving certificates, but not present, were Representatives William Murphy, Timothy Williamson, Raymond Sullivan and Scott Pollard.

President Spear presented certificates of recognition to Councilmen Frank Hyde, Kenneth Cloutier and Glenford Shibley for their dedicated service to the Town of Coventry

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R.I.G.L. 42-46-5 (a) (2)

For the purpose of discussing matters of litigation and collective bargaining

President Spear explained that the purpose of this Executive Session is to share the status of legal issues and negotiation issues with the incoming council members.

Motion made by Glen Shibley seconded by Kenneth Cloutier to recess to Executive Session. All voted aye.

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Glen Shibley to close executive session, seal minutes and reconvene regular session. All voted aye.

President Spear expressed disappointment that new Town Council members did not join in Executive Session, as the Town has some very serious legal matters. We have been advised that there is a desire on the part of new members to change legal counsel and I think that before we make such a decision, that our incoming Town Council members are apprised of the status of legal suits that this Council faced when we came on two years ago.

With regard to one suit, we were able to save \$30 million and are now in the second phase of that suit. It is not in the best interest of this community to make changes until the new members of the council can sit down and review what we've done, where we are and where we are going.

SWEARING-IN OF TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS

Raymond E. Spear, District 1 and Laura A. Flanagan, District 2 were sworn into office by Town Clerk, Cheryl George.

Kerry L. McGee, District 3, was sworn into office by Kevin McGee; Gary P. Cote, District 4 and Thaddeus Jendzejec, District 5 were sworn into office by Secretary of State Ralph Mollis.

SWEARING-IN OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Katherine M. Patenaude, District 2 and Judith Liner, District 5, were sworn into office by Secretary of State Ralph Mollis.

Lianne M. Russell, District 3, was sworn into office by the Honorable John Clark.

ELECTION OF TOWN COUNCIL OFFICERS

Motion made by Councilman Kerry McGee seconded by Councilman Jendzejec to nominate Gary Cote for Town Council President. All voted Aye.

Motion made by Gary Cote seconded by Laura Flanagan to nominate Kerry McGee for Vice President of the Town Council. All voted aye.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

President Cote remarked that he is honored to have been hired by the residents of his district and also to have been elected to a leadership role on the Town Council. He looks forward to working with all council members to continue to provide a town that is safe, with quality education for our children, the ability to enjoy our town services and many forms of recreation. This will not be without challenges; we have many obstacles to overcome. State Aid has been reduced, which puts a huge strain on our ability to provide the same level of services that we are accustomed to, while State mandates continue with no relief in site.

Although the economy shows some signs of recovery, it continues to be a burden on taxpayers. All of us must be able to work together to keep Coventry a great place to live. In order to prepare for another tough budget cycle, we will have to take a hard look at our taxpayer dollars and how they are spent. We have to look at economic growth locally to reduce the tax burden on residents. I do not think there is anyone seated at this council table or in the audience that believes we can tax our way out of this hole.

We need to be more creative than that and think out of the box. We need to bring things to reality that have been talked about but which are very difficult to implement. As a council we should be open to regionalization of some services and keep the lines of communication open with our state officials.

Alternative energy is another area I would like to see us explore. Some communities here in Rhode Island are not only saving large sums of money in utility costs, but are reducing their dependence on fossil fuels and generating income from power generated by solar, wind and water.

There are many commercial properties, vacant buildings and suitable sites for redevelopment that can bring revenue into the town and create jobs for our residents. Expanding Tax Incremental Financing will go a long way in funding capital improvements. As a community, we need to work diligently on community redevelopment to bring in new tax dollars.

With deteriorating infrastructure, using state and federal matching funds can make it attractive to business and lead to economic growth. Over the next two or three months I am going to ask each of the council members to come up with a list of five items that they feel are priority and meant to focus not only on wants and needs but new ideas. Making the list five items instead of ten will be more manageable. Hopefully I can lead this council to a point where all of us will be proud of our accomplishments.

Councilwoman Flanagan commented that she is concerned with the new Council's unwillingness to listen and be briefed in Executive Session on the litigation we have pending against us. I trust that before any decisions are made regarding hiring or firing legal counsel the Town Council will sit in executive session and be briefed.

Councilman Spear remarked that he is pleased to have the opportunity to serve another two years on the council. He expressed his hope that decisions are not made along party lines as political parties should disappear as the Town Council is here to serve the Town of Coventry.

Councilman McGee also stated that he looks forward to working with a unified Town Council.

Councilman Jendzejec thanked the voters, his family, and remarked that he is very happy to be representing the people of District 5. He looks forward to working with the new Council.

President Cote reiterated that this Council works for the people who hired us, not the Democrats or Republicans. If anyone on this Town Council has an idea that will benefit the people of Coventry, I will get behind that idea, push it to the forefront and make sure it gets accomplished.

Motion made by Councilman Jendzejec seconded by Councilwoman Flanagan to adjourn. All voted aye.

Meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

---

Town Clerk