

TOWN OF AVON
2015 ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING MINUTES
MAY 4, 2015

- I. **TOWN COUNCIL CHAIRMAN:** Mr. Mark Zacchio
Town Council Chairman Mark W. Zacchio called the Annual Town Budget Meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Avon Senior Center Community Room. He led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked the citizens for nominations for moderator.
- II. **CITIZENS:**
On a motion made by Tom Harrison and duly seconded by Peggy Roell, it was unanimously voted to elect Diane S. Hornaday as Moderator of the Annual Budget Meeting.
- III. **MODERATOR:**
Diane S. Hornaday thanked those present for giving her the opportunity to be of service to the town. She reminded the assembly that no decision will be made this evening, but that the meeting will be adjourned to a referendum to be held at this on May 13th. The voting hours will be 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Ms. Hornaday announced that the Town Clerk will act as Clerk of the meeting. Ms. Hornaday reviewed the order of the evening's events. She requested the Town Clerk, Ann Dearstyne, to come forward and read the call of the Town Meeting. The Clerk read the following notice

LEGAL NOTICE
TOWN OF AVON
ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING

The Annual Budget meeting of the electors and citizens qualified to vote in Town Meetings of the Town of Avon, Connecticut will be held at the Avon Senior Center, 635 West Avon Road, in the Town of Avon, Connecticut on Monday, May 4, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. for the following purpose:

To receive and consider a resolution for the adoption of the 2015/2016 Annual Budget in the amount of \$86,406,996. as recommended by the Board of Finance, for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2015.

Pursuant to Section 9.4.1 of the Avon Town Charter, the Annual Budget Meeting will be adjourned to a referendum vote on the aforesaid recommended budget to be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2015, between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Electors and persons who are not electors but who are qualified to vote at town meetings will vote at the Avon Senior Center, 635 West Avon Road, Avon, Connecticut.

Absentee ballots are available at the Town Clerk's Office in the Town Hall.

The aforesaid question will be placed on paper ballots under the following heading:
"Shall the Annual Town Budget in the amount of \$86,406,996.
as recommended by the Board of Finance, for the fiscal year commencing
July 1, 2015 be approved?"

Voters approving the proposed question will vote "Yes" and those opposing the proposed question will vote "No".

Dated at Avon, Connecticut, this 16th day of April, 2015.

Thomas F. Harrison, Chairman
Board of Finance

IV. MODERATOR:

Ms. Hornaday called on Mr. Thomas Harrison, Chairman of the Board of Finance, to present the Resolution

V. BOARD OF FINANCE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Thomas Harrison

Mr. Harrison thanked Ms. Hornaday for her willingness to serve as Moderator each year. He acknowledged and welcomed the Boy Scouts present who are working on a citizenship badge. He stated that the Board of Finance at a meeting three weeks ago unanimously approved the Budget Resolution. He stated that the Board's role is to listen to the public at the Public Hearing in April, to listen to the presentation of the Town Council and the Board of Education on their budget requests, analyze those requests, discuss among ourselves and in consultation with the other two Boards. Then, our Board has the role under the Town Charter to make any adjustments we feel is necessary to those budget requests and then adopt a formal budget resolution. This year we did not make any adjustments because we felt, and the citizens seem to agree, that the budgets as submitted were very reasonable, responsible and realistic in keeping with our traditions. Chairman Harrison read the following Resolution.

“Shall the Annual Town Budget in the amount of \$86,406,996.00 as recommended by the Board of Finance, for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2015, be approved?”

Mr. Harrison moved the adoption of this motion.

VI. MODERATOR

A. Ms. Hornaday called for second to motion. Ann Clark seconded the motion.

B. Ms. Hornaday asked Mr. Harrison to comment.

Mr. Harrison stated that the slide presentation was being run by Peg Colligan, Avon's Director of Finance. He led the audience through a PowerPoint Presentation. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

C. Ms. Hornaday asked Mr. Zacchio to comment.

Mr. Zacchio introduced the Council members present; David Pena, Doug Evans, Heather Maguire and Bill Stokesbury. He led the audience through a PowerPoint Presentation. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

D. Ms. Hornaday asked Mrs. Roell to come forward.

Ms. Roell welcomed all present on behalf of the Board of Education. She said a special welcome to the Boy Scouts present. She introduced the members of the Board of Education present; Ames Shea and Brian Glenn. She encouraged all present to support the budget next week. She introduced Superintendent Gary Mala who led the audience through a PowerPoint Presentation. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

E. Ms. Hornaday asked if any other Town Official wished to comment. Chairman Harrison reminded those present that the referendum is next Wednesday. The turnout has been dropping for the last several years. Under the Charter, if we fail to get 9% of the eligible voters out to vote, the budget is automatically approved regardless of what the actual vote was. 80% of the votes could be against the budget, but if 9% of the voters don't turn out, then the budget passes. Please come out to vote next week.

F. Ms. Hornaday asked Citizens discuss Resolution. Ms. Hornaday stated that those eligible to speak must either be an eligible voter in Avon, own taxable property with an assessed value of at least \$1000 as of October 1, 2014 and be a US Citizen. She asked that those that come forward use the microphone and state their name and address of their taxable property.

Ian Rice, 124 Northgate – My question is on the addition of law enforcement officers, which first of all I'm very grateful for. I do have a question, which is I noticed that four patrolmen and dispatchers have been added; it's unclear the timeline here, obviously they have been added. Are any of these new hires replacing somebody; retirees or otherwise left or new. What was the justification for the increase in hiring; expanding population; have our crime stats gone up? I'm curious to know.

Mr. Zacchio stated that he could respond and that Chief Rinaldo could kick in if he was off anywhere. Most of those positions are replacements. Those that were in the letter your reading from are just the new hires that are replacements. Last year we funded two new patrol officers; this year we are funding half of their salaries because we hired them half way through the season. This year we are funding the next two halves so one full time equivalent (FTE) and we are hiring one additional patrol which brings us up to what we would consider full staff based on the road miles that we have and what the Chief and his staff recommend for head count. The primary reason we are adding staff at this point is our police officers are also the first responders for medical emergencies. We have found over the last five or six years as the population has gotten a little bit older, the number of calls for service, in terms of medical emergencies, has risen fairly steeply. We have addressed that through over-time for the most part, over the last five or six years, we have found that that trend has been sustainable so we decided that it was time to add a new head count.

Dick Burkett, 40 School Street – It's been about four years I've haven't been able to get our street repaired. I know in this budget there is \$375,000 for street repair. I read in the paper the other day the road work you want to do on Avon Old Farms is going to run more than \$400,000. Why are we paying some \$375,000 to tell us how to build a road when we might be using our own engineers, (inaudible) we have our own engineering department. We put a roof on the elementary school a couple years back and it cost \$150,000 for someone to tell us how to do it. There's a lot of good roofers out there that would offer to come over and tell us how to do it for nothing. Then we have the little episode out here at Rhodes Company where we paid a consultant there to see if he wanted to put it in there and we should determine if we are going to do a project before we pay someone

to tell us how to do it. It fell through. (Inaudible) why are we spending all this money on outside help when we have our own engineering department.

Mr. Zacchio stated from a roads perspective, overall we use our engineering department, we still have a town engineer. We employ the same engineer, Tom Dawkus, on a part time basis for certain projects that have stretched out over long periods like the Avon Old Farms Relocation project. So, for projects where we can use our own internal engineering department, we still do. For projects that we need more specific type engineering done in order to get cost estimates to determine best uses of property, and you mentioned the Thompson Road facility, we have hired outside consultant and we find that its more efficient and effective to use some of those outside consulting services for the specialty work than it is to employ a bunch of specialists to do work that we very seldom have to do. From a roads perspective, Brandon, School Street is still on the list this year for reconstruction, so that \$375,000 plus the \$662,000, so a little over \$1,000,000 in road paving this year, includes a number of roads this year. You are right we have been trying to do work on School Street for a number of years including a new entrance off of Huckleberry Hill Road which will be part of that process as well. As part of the zoning approval for the two new houses there on the right as you come down School Street.

Dick Burkett added we have a bad corner there and three school buses that go up and down that street every day. It's not possible for a car and a school bus to get around let alone another truck because that lane is only sixteen feet wide, and trucks and buses are eight feet so there's no room.

Mr. Zacchio added expect to see some big improvements there. Mr. Robertson stated just a note on the School Street improvement. Dick and I been talking about this back and forth, we talked maybe a month or so ago, but it may turn out to be a larger project than just a mill and resurfacing, mill and overlay, and an intersection improvement with Huckleberry. We really want to get that roadway geometry correct. As we have discussed, we may have to acquire some property to do that. We are in discussions with that property owner to see whether or not that's a possibility. If it is, it's going to be a much larger project, it's going to cost more money, for a future year. If not, we are going to be into a mill and overlay which would be done this year.

Dick Burkett asked have you surveyed that other person's property, because I know where my line is 10 feet off the road. So I presume his must have some more there, you don't need that much.

Mr. Zacchio stated for the intersection size it's a matter of zoning approval for the two houses on the rear lot of the house that sits up on the top by Huckleberry. There is additional room afforded to the town on the right side as you're going down in order to widen that to make room because of the barn on the corner there.

Dick Burkett said that's not so bad there because you are on level ground and you can see something coming up. Going around that corner is fine in the summer but

is slippery in the winter. I see you raised minimum on senior tax exemption and it included social security which isn't right. Enrollment is going down and big houses are being built so make them pay more taxes.

Armand Perera, 40 Buttonwood Hill – First I'd like to thank everyone for the fine work they do and keeping Avon a great town. I do have a question for the Board of Education as it relates to enrollment decline. I believe these are the same numbers from the period 2009 – 2014 there was an average decline of 6.2% for those years. Expenditures have gone up 13%. So declining student population by about 6.2% with increasing expenditures by 13%. I noticed that your chart indicated that the pension and salary obligation composes about 80% of your budget demands. Is that what that expenditure is attributed to or are there other factors you can elaborate on?

Mr. Mala replied the majority of the Board's budget is salary and benefit related. As you know, we have five organized labor contracts and clearly there is no decrease in the amount of salary, so it's primarily associated with the category you mentioned. If you look at the side Net Per Pupil, it actually increased the amount of money going to non-salary items. It's not proportionate to the salary or benefit increase, but there has been some movement there.

Armand Perera stated that takes care of the initial question, so thank you for answering that. As it relates to the implementation of new information technologies within the school system. So based on my experience in the private sector, typically information technology, the point is reduce the human factor in staffing demands. When I anticipate those kinds of purchases in the future, as we start to introduce these types of technology solutions.

Mr. Mala responded that in some cases we have analyzed replacing job functions with technology, but there's a misconception particularly in education. You cannot replace a good teacher. We have been fortunate to have the community support in the integration of technology; that's not going to replace teachers. We have become as efficient as we can at every level of our organization by capitalizing on technology. But you get to a certain point, if you look at our staffing complement, we are very lean. We have done that consciously. At a certain point the technology won't replace the person. That's probably not the answer you wanted but it is the truth.

Ms. Hornaday acknowledged the next speaker who was a boy scout, and asked if he had a question about the process stating we cannot take questions on the budget unless he is a voter.

Alex Pashcenko, Lovely Street – I just have a question in general. So if you are attempting to add more technology shouldn't more IT be hired because I know there is one IT for all the schools, and it is wrong, just wrong, there's just problems with technology every day, and it's not being solved immediately which will cause a loss of time in teaching and for students to learn. The whole lesson plan could be ruined if the smart board doesn't work or something does not

happen, so shouldn't more IT be hired because of the increase of technology we have at the schools.

Mr. Mala replied that you make a wonderful point. We have eight positions that function within the school district to support the technology. Now you may have been in a classroom perhaps where the technology failed and it took a while for someone to get there. We work on an electronic work order system, and we have what is called a quarterback if a service goes down we deploy the services of the technician right to that room because we don't want to lose the instructional time. I think as I am standing here, I agree with you as we acquire more technology we might need more support, but that support could come in the form of teachers & others becoming more expertise in problem solving as opposed to just turning to a help desk. I thank you for your point.

Ms. Hornaday did not allow a follow up question from Mr. Pashcenko on the budget, but suggested that he had any specific questions on the budget to attend one of the three Board meetings in town where he could ask his questions during the public comment portion.

G. After discussion, advises audience that there being no further discussion, the Budget will be submitted to vote at Referendum on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 at the Avon Senior Center/Community Room, 635 West Avon Road, Avon, Ct, between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

On a motion made by Peggy Roell, seconded by Ann Clark, it was unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Attest,

Ann Dearstyne, Town Clerk