

**AVON TOWN COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
May 20, 2015**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Avon Town Hall, in the Selectmen's Chamber by Chairman Zacchio. Members present: Mrs. Maguire and Messrs: Pena, and Stokesbury.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Zacchio.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

**14/15-80 Approve Resolution: First Company Governor's Horse Guard**

Chairman Zacchio reported that at the last regular Council meeting we had conversation around how the Town could help and support the Horse Guard in the current budget crisis. He added that there was a suggestion that if a resolution from the Town supporting the Horse Guard at the current budget levels and of course assuring that our Horse Guard continues to operate here in Avon would be helpful and that we would be willing to do that. He noted that after some time we believe that it is important that we put our backing behind the Horse Guard and help you folks with that piece of strength. He commented that we continue to have conversations with all three of our State representatives and we are cautiously optimistic that this is going in a good direction for us but even if so that is not a permanent fix and there is some work to be done before the next budget season and we perhaps see the same kind of thinking going on in Hartford. He reported that we drafted a resolution that we think is responsive. He read the resolution.

On a motion made by Mr. Stokesbury, seconded by Mrs. Maguire, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council on this 20<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015 strongly supports the continuous service of the First Company Governor's Horse Guard in the Town of Avon and requests that State Funding for the Guard remain at the current level. Coincidentally, the Horse Guard received their Charter from the State of Connecticut on this same date in 1788.

WHEREAS: The First Company Governor's Horse Guard has the distinction of being the oldest continuously active mounted cavalry unit in the United States. The First Company Governor's Horse Guard was founded in 1778 and has been in its present location since 1954.

WHEREAS: The First Company Governor's Horse Guard gave the existing property to the State of Connecticut in 1964 and the Military Department assigned the property to the Horse Guard for use in perpetuity. The proximity of the Guard to Connecticut's Capital is critical and makes Avon the obvious location.

WHEREAS: The State of Connecticut has invested approximately \$1 million in the Horse

Guard Facility since 1998. These investments include the construction of a new barn and a new administration building completed in 2003.

WHEREAS: The First Company Governor's Horse Guard Troopers are the only certified mounted search and rescue unit in the State. They also run an annual ride for toys event in Avon to support Operation Tribute, which provides holiday presents to the children of deployed soldiers and the "Say Nay to Drugs" program, which visits school children linking horses to their well-being with an anti-drug message.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The First Company Governor's Horse Guard is a treasured institution of the State of Connecticut and the Town of Avon. If the closure of the facility were to occur, it cannot be undone in better times and 237 years of history will be lost forever.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Zacchio, Pena, and Stokesbury voted in favor.

Chairman Zacchio noted that Mr. Evans was not able to attend the meeting this evening but he sends his support for the resolution. Mr. Pena commented that this is the right direction to go and he has spoken to local legislators and Senator Beth Bye who was very positive and supports the Town as well. He added that he has received numerous requests to keep the Horse Guard in Avon. He noted that hopefully with the help from the Capitol things will go in our direction. Mrs. Maguire commented that she is very happy that the resolution will be adopted acknowledging our Town's commitment and support for the First Company Governor's Horse Guard. She noted that the Company's Horse Guard is a venerable institution and a part of the fabric of not only the Town of Avon but the State of Connecticut and a significant part of our history and the First Company Governor's Horse Guard deserves to be preserved, nurtured and protected both for today and for the future generations. She is happy to see the support of the Town and the Council and has a very positive feeling that this will all go our way. Mr. Stokesbury commented that as a past president of the Avon Historical Society and as a member at that time was very active in bringing the Derrin House to the Historical Society from the Department of Military he too joins his fellow Council members in honoring the Horse Guard with this resolution, recognizing its vitality and its participation in our community and very much hate to see it lost as a vital part of our local history and thank you all.

Gary Brooks, Terryville, CT, reported that May 20<sup>th</sup> is the anniversary of the declaration of the Horse Guard's Charter in 1788. He thanked the Town Council for coming together and taking your time out this evening and at the previous meeting and hearing us and coming to our support; it means 200% to us to have you do this, it is very heartfelt to us. He noted that they need the support and glad that the Town is behind them and want to keep the tradition going for everyone who has kept the Horse Guard for 237 years and want it to go for another 237 years.

Terri Wilson, 64 Mountain View Avenue, as President of the Avon Historical Society commented that just yesterday finished the restoration work on the barn to the tune of \$40,000 so that commitment that the Connecticut Trust with \$10,000 of that and \$30,000 from donations and all of the labor and hard work on the barn on that property of the Horse Guard is very important to them. She added that they appreciate Council doing that and back you 100% and are also in contact with the local legislators and hope that this will continue as they have put this forward and can have a commitment to it for the future.

Chairman Zacchio commented that Senator Witkos and Representatives Becker and LeGeys have been working hard for us but also keeping us up-to-date and letting us know when things are happening and ways we can help and this is one of them. We appreciate you being here and coming to the Council meeting last Thursday and more importantly that you continue to keep the Horse Guard going because when you talk to folks from other areas it is not the beautiful tennis courts that we have or great schools but a lot of people recognize Avon and the Horse Guard as synonymous and it is a big part of our fabric and that is all of you and we appreciate all of you and what you do and thank you for it. Mr. Brooks commented that this is the only state in the United States that has a Horse Guard and a Foot Guard like the King of England.

Deborah Mundair, 38 Lord Davis Lane, is a proud resident of Avon who moved here eight years ago from Australia and noted that part of the reason that they chose Avon was because of the sense of community and the history and the uniqueness of this state and this town in particular and it was the Horse Guard's that they knew about half way around the world and the crowds of people watching the drill and ceremony associated with the Queens' cavalry unit shows that there is a genuine interest in history and we would be crazy if this town lost it so thank you for fighting on behalf of the Horse Guard to keep it here. She added that they do not want to see a shopping mall or condos in that beautiful place and we need to protect and honor the traditions and very proud to be associated with this and thank you for your support.

Len Tolisano, 591 West Avon Road, commented that many of us are in a group called the Medical Reserve Corp. which is part of the disaster structure that establishes emergency shelters in various towns, works with the Red Cross for lots of different conditions where people need help and the Horse Guard has been part of that structure since it was originally established approximately eight years ago, not officially though as the Military Department has really failed to recognize the Medical Reserve Corp. or even the emergency planning going on within the region but there is a number of groups, some called certs or doctors and nurses in the Medical Reserve Corp. He noted that the First Company Foot Guard and Horse Guard are both part of the logistics unit and are there to help setup emergency field hospitals, they have equipment, cots, and can provide a lot of the infrastructure needed in an emergency situation. He commented that when there was a storm here they had to open up the High School and many of them had to go out to Manchester to serve on that particular shelter. He noted that even though the Military Department does not recognize their service in that operation they are an integral part of emergency disaster planning for the Capitol Region and that you might want to mention that in your letter as well. He added that doctors and nurses need logistic support and they provide it through the two military units. Mr. Brooks commented that if we are moved out of town we are no longer part of that operation in the Capitol Region.

Kimberly Holmes, 7 Fenwick Drive, commented as working parents of young children her development is flooded with incoming new families that are drawn to this town because of this town's unique commitment to things like the Horse Guard and these new families asked her tonight to please pass along the fact that is something they found unique and as a differentiator when you are looking at towns that want to obtain young working families with children that want to show them something different, really put in roots and feel that the town is committed to giving the children something to look to and admire.

Chairman Zacchio commented to the Town Manager that once the vehicle is chosen for the resolution that the plan was to send this to the Appropriations Committees Chairs as well as our local legislators. He also suggested that there are some really good comments that go along with the resolution and that the Town Manager's cover letter include a body that incorporates what we are hearing tonight to be attached to the resolution. The Town Manager agreed.

Jennifer Jeandell, 35 Buckingham Road, commented on the historical perspective and our current commandant who grew up in the Derrin House and whose father was a former commandant who lived in the Derrin House which is an amazing part of Avon.

Paula Deutz, East Hartford, commented that she currently acts as a union public affairs representative for the Horse Guard and she requested a copy of the letter that goes out so they can share that and show their support in reverse that you are behind us and we would really like to thank you for that. Chairman Zacchio acknowledged that a letter would be sent to her.

Mary Ellen Dio, West Hartford, commented that she is a former member of the First Company Governor's Horse Guard and when she first joined she was proud to say that in 2005 they went down to Washington, D.C. to be part of the Presidential Inaugural and represented the State of Connecticut which was a proud moment.

Chairman Zacchio thanked everyone for their thoughtful comments and will make sure that their comments are incorporated into the letter that the Town Manager sends out. He added that hopefully it helps and finds its way through the Capitol and we have a good outcome. He noted that we are cautiously optimistic that is going to happen but our focus is beyond that, between now and the next budget season when we have now seen a pattern that these types of issues continue to creep up so the strength will be in the next year or so and how we address this and you have our full support and if you need any more help from us you know where to find us.

#### **IV. ADJOURN**

On a motion made by Mr. Pena, seconded by Mr. Stokesbury, it was voted:

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council adjourn the meeting at 6:19 p.m.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Zacchio, Pena, and Stokesbury voted in favor.

**Attest:**

**Ann L. Dearstyne, Town Clerk**