

**AVON TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
March 30, 2020**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. via GoToMeeting by Chairperson Maguire. Members present: Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Speich, Polhamus, and Weber. A quorum was present.

Chairperson Maguire thanked everyone for coming to Council's virtual meeting; this is a tough time for everybody; there are heroes among us everywhere working so hard to get through this most unusual and difficult time; besides medical and financial impact, we must be cognizant of the mental health effects that exist; we are all in this together and carry strength from one another in what is our new normal. She noted that the Town Council and the outstanding Town staff are here to provide resources and support our citizens. She also led with a virtual Pledge of Allegiance followed by a brief moment to pause for those on the front lines of this pandemic.

II. PUBLIC HEARING: None

III. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS: March 5, 2020
March 9, 2020 Special Meeting

On a motion made by Mr. Weber, seconded by Mr. Polhamus, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the minutes of the March 5, 2020 Meeting as drafted. Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Speich, Weber, Polhamus, and Bernetich voted in favor.

On a motion made by Mr. Weber, seconded by Mr. Polhamus, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the minutes of the March 9, 2020 Special Meeting as drafted.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Speich, Weber, Polhamus, and Bernetich voted in favor.

IV. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE - None

V. COMMUNICATION FROM COUNCIL

Mr. Bernetich asked everyone to wash their hands.

Mr. Weber thanked the Town Manager, Town staff, the Board of Education, Avon Public School teachers and administration, various community leaders and organizations including restaurants for their leadership and creativity, and commend all for their hard work during this time.

Mr. Speich appreciates that the Town has pulled together and thanked staff for what they are doing.

Mr. Polhamus thanked the Superintendent of Schools and teachers during this transition with online learning and the school meal program is being utilized. He stated that as we move forward it is going to be important for us to keep an eye on things, how they evolve, and what we can do at the Federal and State level; residents are losing their jobs and the Town will probably need some

kind of tax collection deferment. He recognized BouNom Bakery for their pastry donation to front line staff at Manchester Memorial Hospital with more donations to come; Elephant Trail gave seniors a free meal one day; local residents are hand sewing masks for healthcare workers; it is impressive to see the community come together and makes you proud to be from here.

Chairperson Maguire thanked Town staff for coordinating the recent tour of Public Works facilities, the Avon Police Department, and Town Hall buildings and gave perspective of what that needs to be done and seeing the great work being done. She noted that school meal program is a huge help to the community. She also expressed thanks to all for the excellent communication and assistance during this time.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

18/19-65 Fall Food Truck Carnival and Festival/Community Event

Chairperson Maguire commented that we had a lengthy discussion at our last meeting. She noted that in light of the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic it would be best to let the community regroup once the pandemic is over; the funds will be left in the budget for a community type activity once the pandemic is over. Consensus by Council was unanimous to put the Fall Food Truck Carnival and Festival on hold for another time and will not be held this year.

19/20-03 Amend Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Budget Calendar

Chairperson Maguire reported that as part of the Governor's Executive Order 7I (EO 7I), the Town must amend its budget process going forward for FY 20/21. The Town Manager thanked Jennifer Worsman, Ann Dearstyne, and Grace Tiezzi for re-engineering the budget process over the last few days to comply with EO 7I. He noted that the April newsletter will include the Town Council's proposed budget and there will not be a budget referendum, rather the Board of Finance will approve a budget.

Mr. Polhamus inquired about how the public comment portion will work with this process. The Town Manager responded that we are working on that step which would include accepting comments by US Mail or e-mail which we will set up an account for. Chairperson Maguire commented that these meetings will need to be livestreamed. Mr. Polhamus commented that the expectation is that most communities in Connecticut are going to move to something like this. The Town Manager responded that if they had a referendum process they will not be able to; every town and city in Connecticut is subject to EO 7I regarding no public meetings or referenda. Chairperson Maguire commented on the concern about the public having the opportunity to ask questions but this timeline gives them a good opportunity and the meetings being held on May 4th will include presentations so the public will be able to ask questions at that point as well.

On a motion made by Mr. Speich, seconded by Mr. Weber, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council amend the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Budget Calendar as follows:

TOWN OF AVON FY 2020/2021 BUDGET CALENDAR
REVISED PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 7I

OLD ACTIVITY	OLD DATE	NEW ACTIVITY	NEW DATE
N/A	N/A	Town Council cancels Board of Finance public hearing, Board of Finance Budget Workshop, Annual Town Budget Meeting, First Referendum, Second Referendum and Third Referendum. Town Council adopts budget calendar as revised according to Executive Order 7I. Town Council authorizes Board of Finance to adopt a budget and set a mill rate per Executive Order 7I.	March 30, 2020
Public Hearing on Budget held by Board of Finance not later than three (3) weeks before May 04, 2020 Town Meeting (a) Board of Finance holds evening Budget Workshop(s) with Town Council and Board of Education after the Public Hearing.	April 06, 2020 April 07, 2020	Copy of Budget approved by Town Council printed in Newspaper and printed in Town Newsletter. Includes a request for public comment and directions to submit via U.S. mail or an email on or before May 11 th at 12 noon.	April 20, 2020 (newsletter at post office)
Board of Finance Completes Work on Budget	April 2020	Board of Finance holds a Special Meeting with Town Council and Board of Education. Receives presentation from Town Council, Board of Education and Board of Finance. Public comment accepted via email or U.S. mail following the work session until May 11 th at 12 noon.	May 4, 2020
Copy of Budget approved by the Board of Finance printed in Newspaper at least five (5) days before the Annual Town Meeting	April 28, 2020	Board of Finance holds a Budget Workshop with Town Council and Board of Education. Board of Finance adopts budget and sets mill rate.	May 11, 2020
Annual Town and Budget Meeting First Monday in May	May 04, 2020	Second Budget Workshop (if necessary)	May 18, 2020
First Referendum	May 13, 2020	N/A	N/A
Second Referendum (if necessary)	June 03, 2020	N/A	N/A
Third Referendum (if necessary)	June 17, 2020	N/A	N/A

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs; Polhamus, Weber, Speich, and Bernetich voted in favor.

19/20-15 **FY 20/21 Budget: Approve Resolution Authorizing the Board of Finance to Adopt a Budget**

On a motion made by Mr. Polhamus, seconded by Mr. Speich, it was voted:

Be it resolved, pursuant to section 13 of Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 71, the Town Council authorizes the Board of Finance to adopt a budget for the July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021 fiscal year and to set a mill rate sufficient, in addition to the other estimated yearly income of the Town of Avon and in addition to such revenue surplus, if any, as may be appropriated, not only to pay the expenses of the Town of Avon for such fiscal year, but also to absorb the revenue of the Town of Avon, if any, at the beginning of said fiscal year without the need for any town meeting, special town meeting or referendum. In doing so, the Board of Finance shall comply with the public meeting requirements set forth in Executive Order 7B and shall thereby take all reasonable steps to publicize the draft municipal budget for said fiscal year and receive public comment thereon, including but not limited to, publishing draft budgets on the town website and providing an email address or other means for the public to submit timely comments on the proposed budget.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Polhamus, Weber, Speich, and Bernetich voted in favor.

19/20-37 **Appointment: Building Code Board of Appeals (D – 12/31/2023)**

On a motion made by Mr. Weber, seconded by Mr. Polhamus, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council table agenda item 19/20-37 Appointment: Building Code Board of Appeals (D – 12/31/2023) to the May 7, 2020 meeting.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Polhamus, Weber, Speich, and Bernetich voted in favor.

19/20-41 **Appointment: Lower Farmington River & Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic Committee (R – 12/31/2021)**

On a motion made by Mr. Weber, seconded by Mr. Polhamus, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council table agenda item 19/20-41 Appointment: Lower Farmington River & Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic Committee (R – 12/31/2021) to the May 7, 2020 meeting.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Polhamus, Weber, Speich, and Bernetich voted in favor.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

19/20-45 **COVID-19 Public Health Emergency**

The Town Manager, also Chairman of the Farmington Valley Health District, recognized Town staff including Alan Rosenberg, Director of Social Services, and Jamie DiPace, Emergency Management Director, are on the line this evening. He noted that the State has received a disaster declaration and Avon will be eligible for reimbursement through FEMA for any costs related to COVID-19. He added that Town operations are cleaned every day, in particular the high touch areas, and shortly thereafter we started shifting staff across all departments with an A and B team that do not cross; we have operational changes in place with the Avon Police Department and Public Works; staff has been very professional to work through these issues and team players even though we would much rather have the doors wide open serving the public.

Alan Rosenberg, Director of Social Services, reported that regarding the seniors there are a good number of volunteers ready to assist including the Rotary Club, Lions Club, several local churches, Avon Volunteer Fire Department members, as well as residents; this demonstrates that Avon is a caring community; for those seniors who have asked for help it has gone very well; we stand ready to provide it; the Senior Center has provided weekly telephone reassurance calls to seniors who have expressed such interest; and the VNA has been provided a similar service. He noted that we are beginning to hear from families who have been affected by the closing of businesses for temporary help with food and utility bills; we will track these requests and if additional funds are required we will notify the Town Manager, but we also look at other grant monies or assistance funds before spending local tax dollars; we will also seek FEMA reimbursement for COVID-19 related expenditures. Chairperson Maguire thanked Mr. Rosenberg and to keep them in the loop. Mr. Rosenberg responded that they appreciate the Council's interest, concern, and willingness to step up.

The Town Manager stated that we will monitor Town operations a week at a time; the public has been very understanding; staff is staying up-to-date with e-mails and phone calls and going as well as can be expected given the circumstances; it will have financial ramifications on permit revenues and charges for services and adjustments may be needed during the fiscal year.

Jamie DiPace, Emergency Management Director, reported that there are currently eight confirmed cases in Town; we are working with the State to acquire PPEs for our first responders, mainly the Police Department; the stock pile from the federal government is coming in by the end of the week; private facilities, like nursing homes, are still in need of PPEs. He noted that we received approximately 400 masks through CRCOG from the Department of Public Health but are outdated (N-95). He added that if daycare is needed for healthcare workers there is information on Facebook and on the Town's web site. He noted that the Avon Volunteer Fire Department is pretty well stocked. He added that the Building Department is developing a program where we can do video inspections to try and keep that process going or in person if the building is vacant. Mr. Speich questioned if the eight cases in Town are in nursing homes or health centers. Mr. DiPace responded that the Director of Police Services and Dispatch get the address. Mr. Speich was curious since in several other towns it seems to be localized to health centers. Mr. DiPace responded that as far as he knows there are none at the health centers. Chairperson Maguire thanked Mr. DiPace and we will get those masks taken care of. Mr. Weber inquired about the PPEs coming from the federal government. Mr. DiPace responded that the State Department of Public Health will receive and distribute them to first responders and healthcare facilities. He noted that Fire Chief Appell was very aggressive in the beginning and bought a stockpile of essential items and has offered it to the Police Department. Chairperson Maguire thanked Mr. DiPace for all of his hard work. She noted that we continue to be informed and will keep sending out updates through the Town's web site.

19/20-46 Approve Resolution: Affordable Housing Planning Grant, \$15,000

Chairperson Maguire reported that Hiram Peck, Town Planner, would like to apply for an Affordable Housing Planning Grant which if approved would be used to hire a consultant to work on an affordable housing plan which was created during the amendment of the 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The Town Manager noted that assuming we are successful with the grant we would go through a competitive request for proposals process to select a vendor.

On a motion made by Mr. Speich, seconded by Mr. Weber, it was voted:

WHEREAS, pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 8-30 j Affordable Housing Plan, the State of Connecticut Department of Housing is authorized to extend financial assistance to a municipality for the Town of Avon; and

WHEREAS, it is desirable and in the public interest that the Town of Avon (hereinafter, the “Municipality”) make an application to the State for funding affordable housing plan preparation pursuant to CGS § 8-30 j Affordable Housing Plan Program and to execute an Assistance Agreement for such purpose.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE Avon Town Council

1. That it is cognizant of the conditions and prerequisites for the state financial assistance imposed by the Connecticut General Statutes, particularly CGS § 8-30 j; and
2. That the filing of applications for Connecticut Affordable Housing Plan by the Town of Avon is hereby approved and that Brandon Robertson, Town Manager is directed to execute and file such applications with the State of Connecticut Department of Housing, to provide such additional information, to execute such other documents as may be required, to execute an Assistance Agreement for State financial assistance if such an agreement is offered, to execute any amendments, decision, and revisions thereto, and to act as the authorized representation of the Town of Avon.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Speich, Polhamus, Weber, and Bernetich voted in favor.

19/20-47 MIRA Tipping Fee

Chairperson Maguire reported that an extensive refurbishment of the MIRA facilities in Hartford is required at an estimated cost of \$330 million. The Town Manager noted that MIRA is the successor to CRRA; there are two options that MIRA is looking at to finance the improvements; this is all conceptual right now as they feel out the towns first with the two options: beginning in 2025, a maximum TIP fee of \$145 per ton with annual cost adjustments thereafter; we currently pay \$85 per ton; or we commit our waste stream to the facility for thirty years and it could unlock bonding through the State legislature. He noted that this will impact the cost of the waste coming out of our transfer station or if a resident uses a subscriber like All-Waste or Paine’s it will have an impact on their subscriber fees. He added the consensus with other communities is that they are more comfortable with the second option. Following Council’s consensus with the second option he will write a letter to MIRA stating such. Mr. Polhamus commented that we don’t have a good alternative to this. Mr. Speich commented that we would need to increase the Landfill permit fees in the near future. The Town Manager responded that the fees now do not cover 100% of the cost and should be discussed in the future; subscription fees would likely increase as well. Chairperson Maguire agreed with revisiting the Landfill permit fees. Council gave consensus with the second option which is the way the majority of towns are going and would be prudent to follow.

19/20-48 Appropriation from Town Aid Road (Fund 08): Road Improvements, \$250,000

The Assistant to the Town Manager reported that there is approximately \$678,000 in Unassigned Fund Balance in Town Aid Road right now and would allow us to begin road work a little earlier.

On a motion made by Mr. Polhamus, seconded by Mr. Speich, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council favorably recommends to the Board of Finance an appropriation not to exceed \$250,000.00 from Town Road Aid Fund, Other Financing Sources,

Unassigned Fund Balance, Account #08-0390-43913, to Town Road Aid Fund, Town CIP - Facil/Road Overlay, Road Overlay, Account #08-4831-53003 for the purpose of road improvements.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Speich, Polhamus, Weber, and Bernetich voted in favor.

19/20-49 LoCIP Authorization

The Assistant to the Town Manager noted that this is a reimbursement grant so we only submit for expenditures already made; this entitlement is a little lower than what we had budgeted so the rest of the expenditures go to either Town Aid Road or the General Fund.

On a motion made by Mr. Weber, seconded by Mr. Polhamus, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to apply for a LoCIP grant in the amount of \$110,330.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Polhamus, Speich, and Weber voted in favor.

19/20-50 Avon Volunteer Fire Department: Committee

Chairperson Maguire commented on the request to form a committee to take a look at the Fire Department's needs; we need to formulate a plan with some kind of guidance to get the group going. Mr. Speich stated that he would like to be involved with the committee; scope should include the facilities and looking at the entire plan from a bonding perspective. The committee should include members of the community, roundtable discussion style, and perhaps begin late spring/early summer; scope needs to be discussed first. The Town Manager suggested identified a program to consider as part of the next capital budget; topics include both facilities and apparatus over an approximate ten to twenty year horizon; perhaps Mr. Speich as Chair of the committee and other member suggestions include Fire Chief Bruce Appell, Town Council Representative for the AVFD Jamie DiPace, and residents who have been on past committees. Chairperson Maguire suggested keeping it as an ongoing item on the agenda.

19/20-51 Resignation: Avon Clean Energy Commission (R – 12/31/2021)

On a motion made by Mr. Weber, seconded by Mr. Speich, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept with regret the resignation of Jeffrey Macel from the Avon Clean Energy Commission.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Polhamus, Weber, and Speich voted in favor.

19/20-52 Appointment: Connecticut Water Customer Advisory Council

Chairperson Maguire noted this is something new; CT Water is looking for a resident of the community and customer of CT Water to join this Advisory Council and suggested perhaps a member of the Town Council. Mr. Weber and Mr. Bernetich noted that they have well water.

On a motion made by Mr. Weber, seconded by Mr. Speich, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council appoint Dan Polhamus to the Connecticut Water Customer Advisory Council with a term to expire on December 31, 2021.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Weber, and Speich voted in favor. Mr. Polhamus abstained.

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/MISCELLANEOUS

Misc. A: Purchasing Update: The Town Manager did not provide any updates.

Misc. B: Construction Update: The Town Manager did not provide any updates.

Misc. C: Turf Field/Track Financing: The Town Manager reported that we looking to issue a general obligation bond for both the AHS Synthetic Turf Field and Track Improvement Project and the Town and Public Safety Communications System Replacement Project in late spring/early summer in one issuance; we have to do this bonding before September because if debt is not issued within eighteenth months of the date that the first expenditure for a project is incurred the debt may be taxable. He noted that staff continues to work on the Communications System Project and move it forward.

Misc. D: CALEA/Reaccreditation: The Town Manager shared news that the Avon Police Department is certified by the Commission on Accreditation in Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA); the Town has been accredited since 1993 and is one of twenty-three municipal departments in the State that CALEA accredited; last week we defended our accreditation via a webinar and we were reaccredited; we went through this process in mid-November when we went through some tumultuous changes and we are relieved that CALEA granted the reaccreditation. Chairperson Maguire expressed congratulations.

X. ADJOURN

On a motion made by Mr. Speich, seconded by Mr. Polhamus, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council adjourn the meeting at 6:29 p.m.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Speich, Polhamus, and Weber voted in favor.

Attest: Jennifer Worsman, Clerk