

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
TOWN COUNCIL  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
BUDGET WORKSHOP  
APRIL 4, 2018**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. at the Avon Senior Center by Chairman Thomas Harrison. Members present: Chairman Thomas Harrison, Vice Chairman/Secretary Catherine Durdan, Michael Oleyer, Ken Birk, Margaret Bratton, and Dean Hamilton. Katrina Marin was absent. A quorum was present.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Thomas Harrison.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

**17/18-07**      FY 18/19 Budget: All Three Boards

A.      Board of Finance Workshop: Set Budget Goals and Objectives

Mr. Harrison thanked and welcomed all for coming. The Town Charter provides that after the public hearing the Board of Finance shall confer with the other two Boards to discuss what we heard at the hearing, other issues, things that may have been raised and then the Board of Finance has the authority to make such adjustments in the submitted budgets from the Town Council and the Board of Education as the Board of Finance deems necessary which means we can increase or decrease it. There have been some years where we have decreased it but that is what we will get to tonight. We ask each of the other two bodies what's their take from the hearing, from what they've been hearing through friends, relatives, neighbors in Town and if they have any comments, thoughts, suggestions that we should consider. Then after that we have what we call a "show and tell" where each member of the Board of Finance will give his/her thoughts on whether we should decrease the budget, increase the budget, if it's a decrease by how much for the Town, for the Board of Education, both or neither. As long as there is a four vote majority in favor of doing whatever it is we are going to do, each person on our Board will give his/her opinion, we will make a motion to do whatever the opinion seems to be. The next step is that will be the budget, those will be the numbers that are on the ballot. It will first be discussed at the Town Meeting on Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup> and then Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup> will be the referendum. The public is welcome to observe but there is no public speaking or question opportunity; that is what Monday night's meeting was for. He noted the attendance was disappointing, not the people who spoke, we had some very good comments, some familiar faces, some new faces. We had eleven speakers. The highest we ever had was sixty-five speakers in 2010 with the famous march down West Avon Road. It is being reflected in the smaller turnout at the votes, we are not even getting the 9% minimum the last two years. He does not know how we change that.

Mr. Harrison opened it up for comments from the Town Council.

Mrs. Maguire, Town Council Chairperson, thought overall we had very good questions on Monday night, very thoughtful questions, does not feel there was any negativity towards the budget and sitting through the budget and the workshop it is a good budget, it is fair, we get a lot for what we are taxing people for, we have some new positions to take into account, the new fields that are coming online, a new police officer so we are taking into account public safety, extending the hours at the Library which is a win-win because it not only provides consistencies with the hours but people can have programming there some of which is paid for so that could potentially be revenue.

She feels like it is a fair budget. We are doing some good capital work and have good projects on the horizon. She has not heard any complaints, have not received any e-mails, people seem to be on board with it for those that may have read it. Mr. Harrison commented that there were some questions raised about some projects, the sidewalk along West Avon Road, do those raise any short-term concerns affecting this current budget before us. Mrs. Maguire responded yes, it made us think how we can do this, the Town Manager has a plan in place to do a little bit of work over there. The Town Manager noted that paving plants will be opening soon and we will go out and walk the trail, take some hot patch and make sure it is nice and level; to the extent the expectation is that we need to widen it and replace it with concrete is a much larger project that is going to have to compete with all of the other priorities. It is difficult and expensive to work there because there is a culvert, utilities, right-of-way acquisitions, nothing is ever as easy it looks but we can certainly make it more serviceable. Mrs. Maguire commented that we have a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) out there. The Town Manager noted those are awarded through OPM and given the reception we had there last week he's not expecting much but one can hope.

Mr. Stokesbury took away from the meeting the thought that collectively we do ourselves a bit of a disservice. Avon is extremely well run. We deliver a great deal of service and product to our citizens or residents and we should remind ourselves of that, from paying for fire trucks for cash to the awards that the school system routinely gets to individual successes for students and teachers, from our low mill rate, we barely touch upon it, the financial recognitions we get for the budget management; collectively these add up to a lot of good things about Avon and sometimes we just barrel ahead doing the same old thing and not recognizing how well we are doing it collectively and we should bring that to the voters in a better format.

Mr. Speich commented that business development comes up all the time, probably every year, and he thinks it is a good question. A lady asked about business development and how we bring businesses into Town. He always thinks that is something we should probably think about some more and directed this to the Town Manager. Mr. Harrison commented that particularly with the Grand List being in the difficulty it is in we probably want to encourage it to the extent we can. Mr. Speich commented that we are getting close to build out so we have to find other ways to bring in more income levels. He stated that Diane Hornaday's comments were very interesting to him. He respects her completely, she has been in the Town for years, and she was on the Board of Education and the Town Council. He was disappointed in the turnout too. Maybe it is about a 2% number, maybe nobody really cares but he thinks the presentations were all good the other night and showed a lot of the goodness of the Town, probably more than in the past, that is his feeling, but we really didn't justify some of the positions. We said there was a policeman, why did we need that policeman; Board of Education had the long list of new positions, it is no fault, but why do we need them. Five years ago there was a big run on cutting administration so that was the going thing so now we are putting more administration back in, why do we need to do that. Even though it is a 2% increase, he thinks we still owe it to everyone to bring forth some more justifications. Mr. Harrison responded that is a good thought; people close to it know why, the public at large doesn't. Mr. Speich added that he wished there had been more people out there. He is in favor of where we are today with the budget.

Mr. Pena commented that as soon as the Council approves the budget he goes out into the neighborhood to talk to people and he waits until Monday to find out who is going to attend and what they are going to talk about. He has not really heard anything negative about the budget process. It has been really positive. It is important to go out. He noticed some time ago that many people don't come to the meeting, we had nine to eleven, so he likes to go out and touch base with them; it is more on their turf and may be more open and believes in reaching out to people in general in the Town as many of you do. He has not heard anything negative, they understand where we are, they understand it is a good budget, and they ask if he believes it is a good budget and he says he does, he would not have put it out there and that is really important. Monday night he did not

see that negative part of it; they are concerned about the roads because they are driving on them now, the snow is gone, and they want to know when they are going to be repaired. Aside from that he thinks it is pretty positive about what we have done. He thinks it is a good budget and should be put forward as it is.

Mr. Bernetich commented that he would like to see one year with a zero percent. He knows it is not always possible and if we have another catastrophe it will be even more difficult, but barring any storm or event he would really like to see zero. Maybe start to lead by example in the State of Connecticut which is going broke. He does not know how that is going to happen next year but wanted to be in everyone's year that zero percent in this community with the services that we provide and school system we have would speak volumes about running a Town efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Harrison asked the Board of Finance if they had any comments, replies, or rebuttals for the Town Council. Mrs. Bratton asked how the School Street project is going since it gets brought up every year. The Town Manager responded that there are three components to the project: the first is improving the intersection between School Street and Huckleberry Hill and that piece is done; there is the installation of the sewers further down and that is complete; and what Mr. Burkett is talking about is straightening out the S curve and the issue is that we had a hold up with Eversource because there is a utility pole that has to move and we have to get the final approval of the abutter which to date we haven't been able to get yet. Mrs. Bratton asked if they are just not agreeing to it. The Town Manager responded there are some design elements they are not comfortable with but the Engineering Department has been working with them to get it completed. As he told Mr. Burkett the other night, he is very hopeful that that was the last public hearing he'll make that comment. Mrs. Bratton asked about the sewer comment because a couple of people brought it up, sewer versus septic, it that really anything the Town can do anything about. It seems to be more of a private property thing and if something is being built potentially it could be something that we require as some new rule but if it is existing property is there really anything the Town can do about that. The Town Manager responded that this speaks to the Sewer Facilities Plan and the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) who is in the sewer extension business; we have a section in the Plan of Conservation of Development (POCD) that indicates all of our priorities for sewer extensions but the WPCA is very receptive to popular public input so if there is a project that isn't on that radar or is lower on the POCD, residents come in and talk to the WPCA they are inclined to go ahead and pursue the project; that is how Carriage Drive is going through the process now so we are in that business. What you heard the other night was about the Winding Lane Project, which he did confirm that Engineering Department called Mr. Lyons back the next morning so he is all set so that was a matter of recognizing the value of the project but Mr. Lyons wanted to understand going forward exactly how it is going to roll out and we were able to satisfy him. Mrs. Bratton commented that the fact it was brought up a few times on Monday night does that somehow get to the WPCA. The Town Manager responded yes. Mrs. Bratton asked if it is usually whoever lives on the street has to foot the whole bill or is there some kind of percentage, we pay for some, residents for part. The Town Manager responded there is a formula; there are connection charges if you connect to the lateral; they take the total value of the project and divide it by the properties that are served along the street and assess it based on that. He added that the Town gets an appropriation and we are paid back over time with interest. Mr. Harrison commented that we send out sewage for treatment in either Farmington or Simsbury and asked if they are jacking up fees, how are they treating us as customers of theirs? The Town Manager responded that we have agreements in place, our forefathers were very bright, we do not have a wastewater treatment plant in Avon, we send it to Farmington, Simsbury, and a small amount to Canton; with each of those communities we have an interlocal agreement where the formula which is based on escalator and flow is billed on a monthly or quarterly basis, that payback schedule is baked into the underlying agreement. The WPCA has recently gone through a study with an outside consultant to look at the rates we are charging our users through the Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) and following the

public hearing it is likely you will see an increase in that charge. He noted the work going on Route 4 in Farmington and we are in the process of working with Farmington to finalize the interlocal agreement for our portion of that project. Mr. Harrison commented on the joint Fire Training Facility in Farmington that opened last fall and asked how it is working out. The Town Manager responded that it is working out great and has not heard anything to the contrary; the project is basically complete with some landscaping that needs to be done this spring but all reports are it is being used and to good effect. The Town Manager noted that in terms of the sewer fees those are all paid for separate and not included with the levy; it is in Special Revenue Fund 5 where all revenues and expenditures related to sewer maintenance, operations, and upkeep are budgeted.

Mr. Harrison called on the Board of Education members. Ms. Chute, Board of Education Chairperson, commented that they feel very good about this budget and have gotten good feedback as well. She is very excited to present it to you because we feel that it is a really fair number and going to accomplish quite a bit; the positions that we have put in really are meaningful to the work that we do and is respectful of the people who have been doing those roles. We feel that it is going to make our infrastructure work that much better because they should have been there for a while so to have the ability to put positions back in is always exciting especially when you have other years when you are taking 22.5 positions out so we are very grateful for that. She offered the Superintendent of Schools an opportunity to speak as well and other Board members if they have comments.

Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools, spoke back to the positions because the question was raised and she spoke to these as we went through on Monday night but to reiterate some of it and maybe adding will give you an idea because she would rather that it was very clear as we move forward. The positions that we are adding in, many of them we are reallocating, they were not all additions. There is an increase of a business teacher by 0.4 which is to accomplish additional sections for a personal finance class which is now a State requirement, we need to increase a teaching position for that reason likewise we need to increase it by 0.2 for an English Language Arts teacher to pick up additional sections related to that. We had severe cuts to the new social workers in the schools last year; there were four, at this time two have been reinstated as of this year and looking to reinstate a third next year so that is another addition which is really reinstating some pretty severe cuts that we have not been able to maintain what we need to do as a school system without the appropriate number of social workers. Trying to be fiscally responsible we added one in to split between two schools, Middle School and Thompson Brook, and we would like to see how we can make that work instead of adding the two for each school. Likewise we had previously, in the loss of the 22.5 positions, cut Library Media Specialists which are essential to running the building. It is not as it was when some of us were kids when you just went to the library once in a while and checked out a book; there is a curriculum and instruction that happens in the library to do the research and technology and so on and we are not able to make that work from a curricular angle with the number of people we have after the reductions that were made. We are adding back in, instead of the Library Media Specialist position that had been eliminated, what we are calling a STEM Teacher who will be split between Roaring Brook and Pine Grove Schools. Likewise the Thompson Brook Assistant Principal exists already, we are not adding another administrator, but we have that person there as a 0.6 and looking for it to be full-time, up until three years ago it had been full-time; it is nearly impossible to run a building with 500 children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade with one administrator who has to do all of the evaluations, attend many of the PPTs (meetings of students with special needs) and deal with anything that happens with the other person only being there part-time, particularly as the mandates for special education services increase and mandates for teacher evaluations increase, there is a tremendous amount of time that our administrators spend doing those; it is essential for us to be able to have both of those administrators there full-time instead of when they are only there half of the time. Likewise to the custodian that she spoke about, that we would like to add to be a 0.6 at the Avon Middle School and 0.4 at Central Office. For Central Office, we currently have one of our custodians have to leave the building and

come just in the morning for two hours and have to go back out to one of the schools. There are approximately twenty people that work in Central Office. She has not yet been here a month but she has seen our dealings with vermin and insects that, if we were able to do a little better of a job of keeping the building clean because we had someone that was able to come more often that would certainly be one thing that was eliminated; it is an ongoing battle with mice, ants, and other things which are too unsavory for discussion so yes, we work with pest control but the reality of the situation is that you can't keep a public building that is used for meetings and by people to work in sometimes sixteen hours a day clean by having someone come in for two hours every morning so it is essential that we get even two more hours. Likewise at the Middle School the number of custodians we have there they have to clean the largest number of square feet in the district; we divide up how much they clean per person; trying to be fiscally responsible to maintain the buildings in the way that we ought to as public facilities we are concerned about keeping them as clean as possible. The one complete addition, speaking to the administrator base, is the Director of Human Resources. We have just shy of 500 employees and do not have a Director of Human Resources so that puts us in a predicament often times of which one of the hats the rest of us will be wearing to try to do that role. Investigations to employee conduct, for example, has to be one of us that completes in addition to whatever else is happening which sometimes can be tricky as if it is me or potentially the Business Manager those people often are the ones working near us that we are now having to look into or she will ultimately have to make the decision from an employment standpoint what happens to you so to be involved in the investigation process of the complaint is not the cleanest way to do those kinds of investigations; that is one piece, the pieces we never do but the reality is we do more often than we really speak about because if there is a complaint we look into it. There is also, back to teacher evaluations and evaluations of non-certified staff, that we have someone who ensures those are completed in timely fashion and all documentation as required by a school system is submitted to the State in a timely fashion, that we have employee handbooks, that we have protocols for all of our employees, on the substitutes, the employment service people who come in, oversight of contractors who work part-time, that is a huge part of the machine that does not have oversight by one person, it is parceled out currently. She believes we would be a much more efficient operation with a Director of Human Resources with this many employees. With the High School Assistant Principal that is another that we are not adding in another one, there are two there but one does not work full-time; we currently have 1,100 students in the building with one full-time Principal and one 10-month Assistant Principal who works basically the same school year as the teachers. Unfortunately, running a high school is more than a full-time job for three administrators and a lot happens during the time that teachers aren't there and not just in the summer but at nights and during school vacations and so forth from scheduling to running summer programs and so on, we have to ensure that people are always managing that building, it is open day and night and there is always something happening there; it is a very small piece of the budget because we are looking at two months onto someone who is an existing salaried position. If there was another position that she did not speak or anyone has questions about those please ask me. The Board Clerk, which is someone we no longer have and had been a \$24,000 position and we are looking to add it back in at \$6,000 to make sure there is someone, whether or not they are at all the meetings; the current problem is that is her administrative assistant does all of these minutes, Board meetings, Committee meetings, and have a number of those; she is doing that a good portion of her day right now, and between that and the person that registers everyone for kindergarten and seeing everybody that walks up to that window no matter who they are there to see, that is the entirety of the job that my secretary does at present and she wishes she could say she didn't need one but that truly would not be feasible so looking to have the Board Clerk to be able to do the minutes, even if that turns out to be a stipend to do the minutes off hours, even one of their own secretaries, to listen to sometimes three hours of meetings and transcribe them. She often laughs when she comes down to see Shirley because one of two things are happening - she is around a desk with a 5-year old and the parent registering someone or she has the headphones on transcribing the meetings.

Mrs. Bratton asked that for all of the positions that might be going up for part of a day are all of the current employees willing to extend their day or are we adding other people, where then it costs benefits in addition to the hours. Dr. Carnemolla responded yes, but one will be a retirement; one of our Assistant Principals at the High School is retiring so that is not an addition to her, it will be an addition to whomever takes that position. She responded no, these are not adding in benefits where they don't already exist, these are straight salary.

Mr. Harrison commented on mandates that come down time to time from the State, he asked if there might be others coming down over the next year or two that will add costs to the school systems, not just ours. Dr. Carnemolla responded that what we often find in the school system is that we will get a piece of legislation that has been passed that impacts the way that we do business in November and they retroact it to July 1<sup>st</sup> so more often than not we are well into a year when we find out what they already expected us to be doing or sometimes even rollback the regulations they already put into place. She does not expect our special education mandates to be lessened; those grow every year and the population of students and their needs seems to grow every year too so that is one constant we can always count on. The other piece from a teacher evaluation stand point that plan isn't going anywhere anytime soon either; that has finally been completely rolled out and a number of hours and work that that takes by faculty members and administrators is tremendous; at times it could be full days that administrators spend in the evaluation process. Mr. Harrison asked if somebody could put together for the last five years what the October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment figure was and e-mail it to him; curious to see if there is any significant trend changes over the years.

Mr. Birk commented that one of the prevailing questions that has been swirling around is the Director of Human Resources and he had a good chat with Mr. Robertson about it but from a Town perspective we already have that function and the question that has been out there is if we can consolidate and find some synergy but we know the answer is not and why is that the case. Mr. Robertson commented that in the Matrix Study there were a number of recommendations made where the Town and the Board of Education ought to consider consolidating positions, HR was one of them; we have a nice coincidence here because FY 19 is the first year that the Board of Education is recommending funding for a full-time HR Director in their budget and he just got the retirement notice for our Director of HR and that will be effective June 1<sup>st</sup> so Dr. Carnemolla and I had a very preliminary conversation last week; this is an opportunity we ought not let pass by without giving this some thought and is sure we will have that conversation. Mr. Harrison commented that to the extent we can do those kinds of things the taxpayers will appreciate it; some positions may not lend themselves to consolidation. Mr. Robertson responded this may be one of those but we will both look at it from the perspective of wanting to make it work if we can. In response to a question from Mrs. Bratton, Mr. Robertson responded there are 106 full-time Town positions. Mr. Fleischman, Board of Education member, commented that from his understanding of education the concern would be that with so many different State licensing issues in the world of education, certification issues that must be kept up, certain professional development hours must be reported, training a new teacher mentoring system you would need an HR person who has a background in education, who understands all of those nuisances that are responsible to effectively run the school system. His only concern about one Town wide HR person is you are going to get someone who does not have that background in education and understand all of the laws surrounding those that work in education. He understands trying to be fiscally responsible but you are dealing with a system with over nearly 500 employees that is regulated both by State and Federal laws that a lot of times these laws will not impact Town wide employees, we have to make sure that person has those backgrounds. He does not know if somebody coming from the education world who would have the knowledge and experience to be an HR Director would then also be suited to deal with the Police Department, Public Works because they do not have that background in Town management. Mr. Harrison commented that Dr. Carnemolla and Mr. Robertson can come up with a way to deal with Mr. Fleischman's very valid point.

Ms. Blea, Board of Education member, thinks it has been a really positive experience this year. From what she heard at the public hearing and from the Board of Education side is most significantly around security in schools and a hot topic and important thing that we discuss; it has been so nice that we have all worked so well and all share that common goal, if it's from the SRO or the money thing with the science lab and cameras it has really been a positive thing. She is appreciative and grateful that we were able to work together to get this done for our kids. Mr. Harrison responded that is typical of Avon as it should be.

Mr. Harrison called on Mr. Birk for comments. Mr. Birk said thank you to the Town Council and the Board of Education as well as your staff for the great work in the budget process, a lot of nights, mornings, weekends; a lot of stuff, all fantastic. He agreed with Mr. Bernetic that we would all like no tax increase or even a tax decrease but that is not the current environment we are working in. He applauded the Town Council and the Board of Education for funding and investing towards your long-term pension and OPEB obligations as he thinks it will pay dividends down the road. He also applauded the Board of Education for accepting former Interim Superintendent JeanAnn Paddyfote's suggestion to wean ourselves off of grant funding to some extent by moving some required resources previously covered under the uncertain IDEA grant to the general account, a sly move there. He also gave a shout out, they are not here, but to Peggy Roell, Ames Shea, and some of the former Board of Education members not including himself who were successful at negotiating the high deductible health plans for several employee groups which ultimately saved us nearly a half a million dollars so that is fantastic. As we look into the future with the Grand List where it stands as Tom presented it the other night, he sees three main near term risks: 1) the teacher's contract, 2) revaluation, and 3) unreliable intergovernmental revenues. Of these, the one that from his perspective we as boards have the most control over is the teacher's contract so in order to continue offering quality services to our students as well as value to our taxpayers he urged the Board of Education to creatively deliver the best they can for the community and he is looking at Deb, Jeff, and Jackie, he knows Jay is down in Florida right now, but that is going to be super important this year. That being said, he commends the great work pulling these budgets together. The budgets put forth reflect needs at a cost that he feels are tolerable to the Avon citizens so Mr. Chairman he supports the budget as it is proposed.

Mr. Harrison called on Mr. Hamilton for comments. Mr. Hamilton stated that at least this year we have greater insight into the State's plans to pass its problems onto us. He appreciates the work the Board of Education and staff have done, the Town Council, Brandon, your staff, you are creating this budget; it isn't easy, thank you. The State still doesn't understand how to properly manage its finances. It is still cutting the amounts it sends to the towns for Avon we know that zero dollars is around the corner. Tax law changes are making our local and state taxes more painful. He doesn't know about others, but he does not have a trust fund to tap to continue to pay increasing taxes at every government level. It is not really clear how Connecticut and consequently Avon will be able to survive if current trends continue for many more years. None of us will be able to afford to live here. Beyond your five years Tom, over the last ten school years enrollment has dropped about 400 students from around 3,600 to 3,200 in round figures. You would never realize that but with field expansions and growing budgets a few more years with student declines like this we will have lost enough students equal to one of our primary schools. Then we have the Avon teacher's salary that are close to being the number one highest in Connecticut. Avon's average family income as well as our student performance is notably further down the list. Let's take this into consideration going forward. He is asking for all labor contract negotiations to be open to the public; honest negotiations are public. Total transparency for Avon taxpayers is critical. It is their money being spent. Schools should focus on each student's potential and he thinks we do a pretty good job here on that. Safety and security are part of providing an optimal environment for students and faculty. Trained resource officers are a well-established and data driven intervention that enhances the safety of the school community from breaking up a fight, deescalating an angry pupil, sort of acting as an interim social worker; they can provide onsite education to students and staff about topics

ranging from domestic violence to distractive driving. Police are critical to our community and they're role models for our children. To him, onsite officers in adequate numbers are far more valuable than cameras; they can take action, cameras can't. We don't know what the Governor and legislature are going to do next. They will be looking to dig deeper into our pockets to cover their mistakes like saddling us with their teacher pension promises. While all of us would prefer smaller tax increases or zero percent the majority of the increases we have are baked in through labor contracts. Avon taxpayers are entitled to complete transparency for all labor negotiations. He feels that given overall circumstances, reasonable prudence and discretion are illustrated by the budget before us and he supports it as presented.

Mr. Harrison called on Mrs. Bratton for comments. Mrs. Bratton noted a few things because a lot of people said some good things already. She thanked the Board of Education for their work and she appreciates that they have been stressing the true reality of our Town's ability to pay in the negotiation with different contracts. For Board of Education and Town Council she likes the fact that we have been consulting with our school safety experts and letting them give their opinion and explanations for the priorities and the order; it doesn't mean they won't get to certain other things but there may be reasons for certain priorities. She wanted to thank our police, our volunteer firemen, even our School Resource Officer, that they do a good job. As far as the general comment, she agrees that there is a big concern about our Grand List barely increasing. She thanked Mr. Robertson and the Town Council with continuing to work on growing our commercial and industrial base. She knows we don't have a lot of say in it but we try to make our Town attractive to businesses as much as we are allowed to do and able to do. She supports the budget as is but would certainly love a future zero, but not for this year.

Mr. Harrison called on Mr. Oleyer for comments. Mr. Oleyer stated that every single year he is always very impressed by going through the budgets and this year was the same. This year the Public Hearing was a little different from the six prior that he came to and to that end there were more people requesting more services from us than people complaining about the impending tax hike; that is something important to look at. He thinks our community realizes what we as a municipality offer them and that we are offering services. We got the standard complaint that we always get from some folks saying what are we doing as the Elected Officials to address broader economic problems and he knows Tom said from a macro level we can't do anything and that is absolutely true; there is nothing we can do about a lot of these broad economic problems but what we can do and what he thinks we are doing is making Avon a desirable place to live. We are offering great services and putting together fiscally responsible detailed budgets. The one thing we can do to drive down people's property is not provide services, not fix roads, have bad ball fields, have bad schools and that is the one thing that we are able to control is to make this Town the best Town it can be and that is something he thinks we are doing and in a fiscally responsible way. He also supports the budget as proposed.

Mr. Harrison called on Mrs. Durdan for comments. Mrs. Durdan thanked the Town Council and the Board of Education. She has had the opportunity to review the Town and the Board of Education Budget for the FY 18/19. She also heard what the residents had to say at Monday night's meeting. One of the regulars from Colby Way addressed the problem of the declining property values and she would have to say she heard that when she was campaigning last fall, especially over on the west side. People are trying to sell their homes or even if they were not selling their homes the value of their property was going down and they were quite discouraged. Even houses that had been sitting there, people had already moved, and they changed realtors trying to sell houses; the values are going down so what the resident is saying, when we get the Grand List she thinks we are going to have to take another look at how we are actually managing what we are doing and how we are going to be spending our money. It is not what we want to do, we have been doing a great job, but we may find out that the money is just not going to be there. When we reach that point we are going to have to take a good look and she is not sure exactly what we are going



to be doing. With that in mind, neither the value of the homes or the taxes we use are going to be there in the future, not to that extent unless we have a surprise from the Grand List which would be wonderful but we don't know what is going to happen, we will wait and find out. When we talked about the money from the State for the sidewalks, we used to say we used to get back three cents on the dollar, she doesn't know what we get back now. She will support the budget, the 2.48% but she would suggest going forward that we might want to consider keeping it flat and take a look and see what is happening. By the time we get the Grand List they will be working on the budget but she cannot see that we are going to have any good news. She supports the budget.

Mr. Harrison stated that all of us sincerely do want to thank the Board of Education and the Town Council for their very hard work in putting together responsible budgets. Avon residents, particularly parents are not shy or hesitant in Avon to offer their opinions to all of us and say we should spend on this and spend on that; that is their prerogative, they do it very effectively and very aggressively so we understand the pressures that all three Boards face from our residents here in Town. Even in the face of all of that, he thinks everybody will agree that we do provide a very good level of services in this Town, in schools, public facilities and so forth and one reason why we attract the kinds of people to Avon that we have here. He also shares the concern about the revaluation going on this year; the timing is interesting, the field work will take place during the summer but the new prospective, tentative Grand List has to be placed by October 1<sup>st</sup> which is before budget processes and development begins. It is not final on October 1<sup>st</sup> because there is still an appeals process if you don't like your assessment we have a Board of Assessment Appeals, you go there first, if you don't like the result there you could get into State court so October 1<sup>st</sup> may or may not be the final number for what the Grand List will be but all the Boards have to work on budget preparation with what we have as of October 1<sup>st</sup>. For the Monday night presentation we had Harry DerAsadourian, Town Assessor, some of the appeals were resolved so we had a little bit more money going into Monday night's hearing that we had back in October 1<sup>st</sup> but not an order of magnitude. So essentially when your Boards are working on your budget development starting late this year will have a 98-99% accurate Grand List and the changes from the Board of Assessment Appeals are not enough to swing it one way or the other so we don't know what is going to be but his sense is if it does grow it won't be by much. This year it grew by a miniscule of 0.x% and it raised the grand total of about \$115,000 extra to spend so we're not going to have a lot of extra money sloshing around in the Grand List so please keep that in mind. He too, as with many of you, would love it if we can sometime have a flat budget from year to year; don't know if that is possible but he would like everybody on the other two Boards keep that in mind knowing we are going to have a low Grand List growth and we're not going to get much help from our friends down in Hartford. As you go into your budget preparations for next fiscal year let's see if we can't all work together to figure out some ways, whether it is more consolidation of services or whatever, but to try to keep the growth in spending and therefore the required growth in taxing as flat as possible, if we can do that. Having said that, he too plan to support the budgets as submitted. He thinks they are a very good exercise given the reality of the financial conditions which are not going to get any better. But these are good budgets and deserve to be presented to the voters. He would love it if we get about 9% this year; it would be so nice after a couple of years that we haven't seen that.

B. Adopt Final Recommended Budget

On a motion made by Thomas Harrison, seconded by Ken Birk, it was voted: **RESOLVED:** In accordance with Section 9.4.1(b) of the Town Charter of the Town of Avon, after a public hearing duly held on April 2, 2018 and after due consultation with the Town Council and the Board of Education on April 4, 2018, the Avon Board of Finance hereby recommends to the Annual Budget Meeting a Budget in the amount of \$92,919,694 for Fiscal Year 2018/2019. Messrs: Harrison, Birk, Hamilton, Oleyer and Mmes. Bratton and Durdan voted in favor.

C. Sign Call of the May 7, 2018 Town and Budget Meeting

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

There was none.

**V. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was none.

**VI. ADJOURN**

On a motion made by Thomas Harrison, seconded by Dean Hamilton, it was voted:

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Finance adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Messrs: Harrison, Birk, Hamilton, Oleyer and Mmes. Bratton and Durdan voted in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Catherine Durdan, Secretary

Attest: Jennifer Worsman, Clerk

All referenced material is available to the public in the Town Manager's Office.