



Town of Avon Newsletter

ISSUE LI

January 2017

FY 2017/2018 Budget Process

The process is well underway to prepare the FY 2017/2018 budget that takes effect on July 1, 2017. All town departments have submitted their capital and operating budgets, and Town Council will review the Town Manager's proposed budget at a workshop scheduled for February 11th. Residents who are interested in participating in the process are encouraged to attend the following meetings, during which details of the budget will be discussed:

Town Council Budget Workshop: The workshop will be held on Saturday, February 11th in the Selectmen's Chamber at Town Hall beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending by noon. The complete budget calendar is available on-line at: www.avonct.gov.

Board of Finance Meetings: The public hearing on the budget will be held on Monday, April 3rd at 7:00 p.m. at the Avon Senior Center. Residents wishing to provide the Board of Finance with input about the budget are welcome to attend.

Town Receives Bright Ideas and CT Green Bank Grants

As a result of its efforts to reduce energy use and invest in renewable energy, the Town of Avon has earned two grants (totaling \$28,000) through its participation in the Clean Energy Communities (CEC) Program. The CEC Program requires that the Town commit to a non-binding 2018 deadline to reduce municipal building energy consumption by 20% and to purchase or produce 20% of its energy from renewable sources such as solar. The Town qualified for these grants based on points earned by residents, businesses, and municipal facilities for energy related improvements and participation in energy related programs.

The Bright Ideas Grant, a \$10,000 award, will be used to convert twenty light fixtures to LED in the Avon High School parking lot. This is the second and final phase of the parking lot lighting conversion project that began in December 2015. The Bright Ideas Grant program is funded and administered by Eversource and United Illuminating. This is the second Bright Ideas Grant the Town has earned. The first was used to offset the cost of a more efficient HVAC system at Town Hall.

The CT Green Bank Grant, an \$18,000 award, will be used to convert the interior lighting fixtures in Town Hall Buildings 5, 6, 7, and 8 to LED. The CT Green Bank funds and administers this grant program in conjunction with Eversource and United Illuminating.

We anticipate that both of these grant funded projects will be completed this winter season.

FREE tax help available at the Avon Library



All ages and incomes welcome! Our AARP tax aide services is a free program designed to help people complete basic tax returns on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Our volunteers are IRS trained and certified every year. Contact the reference desk for details (860) 673-9712 Ext. 4.

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Construction Updates

Road Improvements—\$1,063,037 was approved as part of the fiscal year 2016/2017 (FY17) Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget for road improvements. Improvements were made to Kingsbridge, Hammersmith, Cobblestone Road, Tamara Circle, Berta Lane, Betsy Lane, Cadbury Turn, Indian Pipe Trail, Sunset Trail, and a segment of Pioneer Drive. The Roaring Brook School front parking lot was also improved this season.



Old Wheeler Lane Bridge Rehabilitation—\$200,000 was approved as part of the FY17 CIP to partially fund the rehabilitation of the Old Wheeler Lane Bridge over Roaring Brook. The CT Department of Transportation determined that the bridge qualified for a grant through the Federal Local Bridge program to cover 80% of the \$1 million project. The Town was responsible for the remaining costs. The scope of work included the replacement of the superstructure and the utilization of existing abutments; essentially rehabilitating the bridge within its existing

footprint. The project began in June 2016 after school concluded and the bridge officially re-opened to traffic on August 26th. All punch list items were completed in early November.

Live Fire Training Center—Avon's Public Works (DPW) staff spent much of the summer providing over \$174,000 in in-kind services for the Live Fire Training Center project. The project, located in Farmington, will be shared equally by the Avon Volunteer Fire Department and the Farmington Fire Department and will provide firefighters from both communities with essential live fire experience.

DPW crews completed their work on the site in early November and a dedication ceremony was held on November 5th. We anticipate that several ancillary projects will be completed in the spring at the discretion of the building committee.

Village Center Streetscape Improvements—The east side of Simsbury Road received some improvements this fall. You may have noticed the addition of sidewalks from Fisher Drive (Sperry Park) to the Simsbury town line. This project is the result of a \$450,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant from the State that the Town received in 2014. In addition to the sidewalks, the scope of work includes the installation of decorative LED carriage lighting. As of this writing, the light fixtures have been delivered and we anticipate that they will be installed by DPW staff during the winter months, weather permitting.

This is the fourth STEAP grant the Town received for Village Center Streetscape Improvements. The Town's last STEAP grant-funded project, the installation of sidewalks and decorative curbing from the intersection of Route 44 and Simsbury Road to Fisher Drive, was completed in 2013. Each of these grant-funded improvement projects has contributed to the development of the Avon Village Center as a more identifiable, vibrant, pedestrian-friendly area that remains true to Avon's history, character, and tradition.



News from Social Services

- ♦ **CT Energy Assistance Program:** The State of Connecticut can help households pay for primary heating bills (i.e. oil, propane, electric, and gas). To be eligible, a household income must be less than 150% of the federal poverty income guidelines and the applicant must meet a certain limit for assets. If you have never applied and/or are interested in receiving more information on this program, please visit our website, www.avonct.gov, under the Social Services link ("Energy Assistance & Renters Rebate"), or call our office at (860) 409-4346 to see if you may qualify. **Applications are by appointment only and the deadline is April 28th.**
- ♦ **Operation Fuel** may be able to provide one-time assistance with heating bills for those households who have applied for the CT Energy Assistance Program and were found to be slightly over income/asset limits. All those interested must apply for the CT Energy Assistance Program before contacting Operation Fuel. More information is available through Gifts of Love at (860) 676-2323.

Tax Relief For Elderly and Disabled Homeowners

At their meeting on January 5, 2017, the Town Council approved a two year extension of the Town's Elderly Property Tax Relief Program and raised the income limit from \$55,000 to \$57,500. Homeowners who are age 65 or older or totally disabled may be eligible for up to \$2,190 (for a married couple) or \$1,940 (for an unmarried individual) in property tax relief through the Town's Elderly Property Tax Relief Program. To be eligible, you must have been 65 or older by 12/31/16, your adjusted gross income plus social security has to be \$57,500 or less, and you must have owned your home on October 1, 2016. Applications must be received by May 15, 2017. If you have any questions or feel you might be eligible, please contact the Assessor's Office at (860) 409-4335 for further information.

From the Avon Volunteer Fire Department

Thank you to everyone who supported the Avon Volunteer Fire Department in 2016 – from financial contributions, to donating at our food and blood drives, and more. We are grateful for you.

- ♦ **Snow Removal Reminder** - As the snow piles up this winter, please make sure to dig out any and all fire hydrants near your home or office. It is imperative that firefighters be able to access the hydrants quickly when needed.
- ♦ **Check Your Smoke and CO Alarms** - We talk about replacing batteries when we change the clocks, but you should test your smoke and CO alarms monthly – make sure they are working and they have not expired. To find out how old a smoke alarm is and its expiration date, simply look on the back of the alarm where the date of manufacture is marked. The smoke alarm should be replaced 10 years from that date (*not* the date of purchase).
- ♦ **Help Us Help You** - There are 26,000 firefighters in the State of Connecticut. Eighty-three percent of them are volunteers. In Avon, our Fire Department is 100 percent volunteer, and we can always use more help. Whether you want to be a firefighter or an administrative assistant or anything in between, if you have the time and desire, we have a job for you and will provide all the training necessary. To learn more, call the Avon Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD) at (860) 677-2644, visit www.avonvfd.org, connect on Facebook at AvonVFD, or stop by the Company 1 firehouse located at 25 Darling Drive any Monday evening after 7:00 p.m.



Avon Recreation Summer Program Registration will begin at the end of April. More detailed information will be sent out soon.



Avon Library Staff Receive National Recognition

Avon Library's children's staff is getting some national recognition! "On the Creative Edge: The Artistic Side of One Library" is an article written by Library Specialist Mary Fletcher about creativity programming at the Avon Free Public Library which will be featured in the winter issue of *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*. Mary Fletcher and Kari Ann St. Jean, Children's & Teen Services Manager, will also be presenting a lecture in January on their art based creative programs at the Symposium on the Future of Libraries during the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. Congratulations to Kari Ann, Mary and all the children's staff. Stop by the library to check out our nationally known children's art studio.

Real Estate & Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes

The second installment of the real estate and supplemental motor vehicle taxes, which came due January 1, 2017, must be paid by February 1st to avoid State mandated interest charges. The Revenue Office is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Town Offices will be closed January 16th in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Payments can also be made online. Go to www.avonct.gov and click the green button, "Pay Taxes Online" in the middle of the home page. Any questions? Please call the Collector of Revenue Office at (860) 409-4306. Thank You!

News from the Avon Chamber of Commerce

Fall 2016 Recap:

On Saturday, November 26, the Avon Chamber sponsored a **Small Business Saturday Promotion** where nearly 30 member businesses offered a special one-day 20% Discount on a variety of products, goods and services.



Tuesday, December 20, marked the **11th Annual Avon Chamber Day at the WTIC NewsTalk 1080 Holiday Store to Benefit The Salvation Army** at Avon Old Farms Hotel. Member businesses served as greeters, sorters, and also contributed monetary donations, non-perishable food, and new, unwrapped toys that were collected at the Chamber's December Business After Hours.

Ahead for 2017:

- On Thursday, January 26, from 8:30-10 a.m., at Avon Health Center, the Avon Chamber is sponsoring a **Primer for Avon Businesses on the Use of Temporary Signs**.
- Our Junior Achievement of Southwest New England/Avon Chamber collaborative continues with our **2nd JA Career Walk** this spring.
- Look for a new Avon Chamber/My HomeTown Map later this spring.
- Our **2nd Annual Food Drive to Benefit the Avon Food Pantry** returns this August.
- Our **2nd Annual Small Business Saturday Promotion** returns this November.

The Avon Chamber of Commerce is a vibrant, innovative, active not-for-profit business/economic development organization that achieves its goals without use of local, state or federal funding. Looking for a Local Business? Need a Local First Card? Interested in Growing Your Business? Please visit us at www.avonchamber.com.





Avon Water Company to Join Connecticut Water

The Avon Water Company is joining Connecticut Water. Both companies have a long history of service to their customers, including residents in Avon. Avon Water serves about 4,660 customers in town while Connecticut Water serves nearly 1,100. The merger should be seamless to customers of both companies, keeping the same rates and commitment to customers and the community.

Connecticut Water will continue its long tradition of providing excellent service to customers with the benefit of Avon Water Company employees staying on under new ownership. Robert W. Wesneski, President of Avon Water Company, stated, "Our experienced team of employees will continue to serve their local customers and community as part of Connecticut Water. We will have access to support from Connecticut Water's team of experienced water professionals who share our commitment to customer service and the environment."

The merger requires the approval of the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority and is expected to be completed by April 2017. Customers with questions about the process should contact Avon Water at (860) 678-0001.

2016 Holiday Basket Program

Avon Social Services and Jim Martino of the Avon Food Pantry would like to thank all of our wonderful sponsors who helped create food baskets for both Thanksgiving and the Winter Holidays. Thanks to the generosity of our Sponsors who helped to brighten so many families' Hanukkah and Christmas celebrations with presents, food and gift cards.



Christmas Tree Pick Up

The Public Works Department began picking up Christmas trees on Tuesday, January 3, 2017. There is no established schedule with this pick up. Multiple passes will be made throughout the Town until all trees have been picked up. Last day for pick up will be January 31st.

Annual Report & Calendar

Residents are reminded that a limited number of the Town's Annual Report and Calendar are available for pickup in the Town Manager's Office at Town Hall, or at the Avon Free Public Library, Senior Center and Landfill. Please come get one while they last!

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING
INFORMATION PRINTED IN THIS NEWSLETTER,
CALL THE TOWN MANAGER'S OFFICE,
AVON TOWN HALL, AT (860) 409-4300.

The Public Works Department would like to remind residents that, in accordance with Town Policy, the Town of Avon is responsible for mailbox damage **only** if a plow makes contact with a mailbox. **For a complete description of the Town's Policy, please log onto www.avonct.gov.**



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IMPORTANT DATES

Town Council Budget Workshop
Saturday, February 11, 2017
Town Hall - Selectmen's Chamber
7:30 a.m.

FY 2017/2018
Annual Budget Public Hearing
Monday, April 3, 2017
Avon Senior Center
7:00 p.m.