

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

**1. William Bender, 124 Forge Drive**

Dear Mr. Robertson: I have a couple of thoughts on the forthcoming budget. In addition to extending the (already announced) grace period, why not allow splitting payments? In other words, we could pay half on July 1 and half on October 1. That way, the town would get at least a partial revenue stream immediately, and people might find the payments less burdensome if they were spread out. I think tax payments should be quarterly anyway. The budget should be frozen (including the school system) at the current fiscal year level. It seems reasonable to assume that there will be a shortfall anyway, and trying to raise taxes would simply exacerbate an already critical fiscal and social situation. Thank you in advance for your consideration!

**2. Margaret Sterns, 41 Byron Drive**

This is no time to be raising taxes when so many people are struggling.

**3. Linda K. Crookshanks, 2 Ridgefield Place**

2020/2021 is going to be a difficult year financially for most folks in light of the economic devastation caused by COVID-19. Therefore I think it is wrong to propose a budget increase; I think flat or hopefully a reduction is much more appropriate in the circumstances. I do understand the difficulty of living with a flat or reduced budget but this is exactly what most of our citizens will need to figure out. I would certainly expect that there have been learnings from the shutdown on how some things can be done more efficiently or how some activities can be eliminated. I urge to look very carefully at the numbers and develop a more livable budget. Thank you for your attention.

**4. Robert Eckhoff, 1 Wills Walk**

This budget proposal is not based on the reality of the post COVID world. I saw in the Courant recently, even Hartford is looking at a 1% budget reduction and Middletown has committed to a 0% tax increase. There has to be ways to cut without impacting services. I have been in the town offices and every department seems to have 2 admins and they never seem that busy. Most companies use a shared services call center with cross-trained agents at much reduced cost. Also I have been around AHS and all the buses leaving have only a few students and the parking lot is full of student cars. Lengthen the routes and fill the busses. Gas prices are way down. This should save the town. Also put on hold beautification projects like the sidewalk and lights to nowhere in front of the BOE. Anyway this is just from a casual observer with no city management expertise. As is popular to say around here, "Do your job!" As a senior I would also like to note the inflation adjustment for Social Security in 2020 was 1.6% and is likely to be lower in 2021.

**5. Bryan Kisner, 22 Birchwood Road**

Good Afternoon, I'm a town resident and received the town of Avon Newsletter in the mail and scrolled through it quickly and was shocked to see a proposed budget increase of almost 5%. It is unfathomable with the current economic downturn that a budget increase of 5% would even be proposed. The private sector is ripe with layoffs and compensation reductions and yet the town government is attempting to drive through a 5% increase. When this Covid 19 crisis finally clears there are going to be numerous businesses that don't return which will

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drive our tax revenue down. I implore you to please review this increase and think about austerity measures and cuts rather than increases. Families are already facing financial hardships and burdens and our government shouldn't add to said burdens. I simply ask that local government acts responsibly. Thank you for your time.

**6. Karen Morris, 88 Cold Spring Road**

Thank you for all your work for the town! I hope you are all staying well! I am writing to let you know that I hope you'll support the budget for the schools and prioritize the school budget. I am a mom of two in the high school and, while they have already lost so much from this year, I would hope that they wouldn't return in the fall to further decreased experience and resources due to budget cuts. The slightest cuts always have a big impact at the school and never go unnoticed. Thanks.

**7. Scott Pelletier, 16 Pinehurst Drive**

Greetings, Given the financial impact that Covid-19 is inflicting on everyone I am against the increased mill rate / budget. We are in an unusual time and likely headed toward a significant downturn in the economy. My family has already experienced income loss and I feel confident there are and will be many more within the community. Avon should be following the federal government and many private institutions to lessen the financial burden on its members. At a minimum, the town should be looking to maintain the 2018/2019 budget. This year is not the year to increase taxes.

**8. Christina Brown, 12 Ashford Drive**

I understand that board members have worked hard on the budget and the increase was proposed before the pandemic crisis. Given that, this is not the time to raise our taxes. Too many residents are suffering financially and we know that the fall out is going to create other financial constraints. I'm urging you to rescind the budget increase. Those of us with moderate means are going to be affected worse than those who have substantial incomes to pull them through. This is not the year for wage increases when so many are losing incomes. I hope that everything is being done to reach out to the Avon community to help our neighbors in need. I haven't seen anything, but may be missing some of the communications. May you all be well.

**9. T. Shcheglova, 142 Deepwood Road**

Dear Sir, This difficult time, when the country is in a terrible financial situation, with a limited amount of financial support. I think Town of Avon must adjust some expenses for 20/21 and don't increase Mill rate for this year (take example from other towns Simsbury, Middletown). We can cut some expenses from the Board of Education, Culture, and Capital Improvement Program, (I have a light on my street not change for the last 2 years, but we paid for improvement every year). Plus The Board of education closed the school in March and probably save money for 3 months, why you can't move funds from this year to next. Plus maybe don't increase salary by 2.5 %- 3%, increase only by 1% (some don't have income at all). I think Town management need to think about people and reconsider the budget, without increase Mill rate.

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**10. Marsha and Simon Krebs, 152 Hollister Drive**

Dear Avon Town Manager/Avon Town Council/Avon Board of Finance, We do not normally comment on proposed budgets and we normally put our trust in the elected officials in the Board of Finance and Town Council. However this year, as stated even in the Town of Avon Newsletter (April 2020), is **not** a typical year. We are absolutely **appalled** that the Town Council/Board of Finance proposes a budget increase for the next fiscal year of 4.68% and a mill rate increase of 3.47%. People in the Town of Avon have lost their jobs and continue to lose their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people are currently taking huge 20% salary paycuts (e.g. UTC, ESPN) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people are being furloughed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The economy is shrinking rapidly and we are heading into a very serious recession in CT and the USA due to COVID-19. On top of this, property prices and home values in Avon have fallen significantly recently (even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit) and are likely to fall significantly in the next year due to the economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Trump cap on the SALT deduction in 2018 has further reduced the income of middle class residents in CT with high property taxes (most Avon residents). Many Avon residents saw their sewer usage bills double a couple of years ago. Avon residents are continually being squeezed financially. This cannot continue in these uncertain financial times. **Avon residents cannot afford a rise in property taxes** at the moment. In fact given the current economic situation **Avon Town should be proposing a reduction in local property** taxes to help its residents financially because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a minimum they should not be increasing them. These are uncertain financial times, there should be no salary increases, no funds for new police cars or communication masts (even if needed - unfortunately we cannot afford them now - it needs to be deferred to a later date once the economy has recovered). People should be thankful just to still have a paying job and a pension and not expect pay rises. Anything that can take a financial cut or cost saving should. One exception to this is the school system. This is a great town with a great school system. The school system needs to be maintained more than anything else as this is the main reason people move here. Without the great public school system the financial situation of Avon would be much, much worse. However the school system too should not get significantly increased funds next year because we cannot afford it, instead they should try and make do with the same money as last year if at all possible. But cost savings and cuts need to be made in everything else. People have to work out how to do the same with less money - business has to do this - Avon Town does too. This is a time to economize, become more efficient, cost effective and less wasteful. Let's make do with what we already have, maintain our schools and make funding cuts everywhere else where we possibly can.

**11. Lisa M. Anderson, 2 Henderson Drive**

I am writing to show my support for adopting the budget proposal which involves a tax increase. I am against reducing the increase to 0. I am particularly favorable to granting the spending increase for the public schools. A zero increase for our schools in these difficult and uncertain times would be damaging. I am in favor of the proposed budget.

**12. Claire Henderson, 1 Keystone Circle**

Good Afternoon, Tom. I have read the material prepared and released in the April Avon Newsletter and was disappointed to read of a budget/mill rate increase during these uncertain times. If there has ever been a year to have a zero increase, this has to be it. There is not a

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resident of this town who is not impacted by the pandemic and many more than most of us could ever imagine. In a year of job loss, furloughs, food insecurity and personal loss, any type of tax increase would be a personal affront and totally dismissive of personal loss. I hope the wisdom of the Board of Finance turns down the requested budgets from the Town Council and Board of Education and instructs them to work with the same amount as last year. Anything else would be unacceptable to me. Please stay well and persevere.

**13. Ryan Miclette, 148 Kingswood Drive**

Along with several other Avon residents, I am opposed to the significant increase in the proposed budget across the board as well as the increase in taxes. The town needs to be more financially responsible by cutting back expenses and leaving taxes flat especially during this time when a lot of families are under financial hardships due to the virus. Many other CT towns have taken the impact of the virus into consideration and have revisited their budgets to ensure no tax increases and would hope that Avon would do the same. I think it is unfortunate that the state has decided to not allow residents to vote on their budgets as I am certain this budget would be voted down in a heartbeat by our residents. Thank you for considering my thoughts.

**14. Eileen Stephan, 92 Wildwood Drive**

With all due respect to those involved in proposing a budget for the next fiscal year, it is beyond my comprehension a budget increase of even one cent is on the table. While I support the town's decision to keep all employees on staff, that commitment appropriately demands a rigorous review of budgets and actually \*finding\* opportunities to save across the town. Anecdotes abound of first-hand experiences of waste (i.e. being told by the teacher for sophomore math at AHS last year that while the school purchases very expensive textbooks for each student, those books are \*not\* used -- in fact, no one could even give me a copy -- and the teacher taught by copying and distributing worksheets for every single class!). This was not, I'm afraid, a unique situation. Add that up across the town and on every line item, and you've got some substantial savings. Every year, the BoF and the BoE should consider the funding from taxpayers as a moral responsibility, and even more so this year. Residents have been leaving Avon, many taking considerable losses on their real estate, to move to areas with much lower tax burdens and that will continue if town leadership does not find the courage to say "enough." I'm not suggesting this is easy, but everyone is being asked to be creative and conservative. No better environment exists for creative problem solving than a crisis. Take advantage of it. Thank you for listening.

**15. Prasad Panthagani, MD, 10 Southgate**

Hi Brandon, I hope the Town Management will note the precarious financial condition of some if not most of the residents and refrain from increasing the taxes for 2020-2021. Without delving into the details of the various expenses the town incurs to justify an increase in mill rate, I'll give a reason as to why it should not as it pertains to me. I am sure you are aware from previous interactions with you that I am an Ophthalmologist. I have not seen a patient in the last 6-7 weeks as per the advice of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. As there is no income coming in, I had to lay off my medical assistant (my only employee), and I am not sure

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when I can reopen my practice. Even if I reopen my practice, there may not be many patients willing to risk their health to visit me for routine eye care. Meanwhile, I still have to continue to pay my rent, utilities, medical liability insurance and all sorts of other insurances. I am sure other residents have equally valid reasons to request the town to forego a tax increase for this year. Under these extenuating circumstances it would be incredibly tone deaf of the Avon Town Management to go ahead with a tax increase on its citizens. I request them to reconsider their proposed budget for this year and be considerate to the reasonable request of its residents. Thank you.

**16. Ernest McNeill, Jr., 41 Tyler Court**

To the town council and board of finance, As a long time town resident I have been supportive of the good stewardship of our finances over the years and the quality of services provided in Avon. In my 16 years as a resident and tax payer, this is my first time reaching out to you. In the current year, the proposed budget and tax increases, which have been under development for months per the normal process, seem suddenly out of place with the new economic reality faced by residents of the town. An increase driven primarily by increases in salaries and employee benefits seems particularly insensitive to the current economic environment and the reality faced by most of its citizens. Whether they be service workers who have lost their jobs, retirees who live on fixed incomes or even higher wage workers whose jobs security has become uncertain, and everyone who has seen the value of their retirement savings plummet; no one has been unaffected. I ask that the council and board step back and give due consideration to the current economic reality and pervasive uncertainty we collectively face. The budget should be kept as close to flat as possible. There can always be raises and more generous benefits in the future when the clouds clear.

**17. Priscilla Lester, 19 Old Mill Road**

Board of finance – As a resident of Avon, I am asking you to not increase taxes or increase budget spending for this year. Thank you!

**18. Jonathan Lester, 19 Old Mill Road**

Please do not raise the budget or taxes. Thanks.

**19. Daniel Lerner, 5 Cranbrook**

To whom it may concern, I have been a resident of the town of Avon for 4 years. Every year we see our taxes increase. At this most difficult and uncertain times, I do not feel a tax increase is appropriate. Unemployment is almost as high as it was in the 1930s during the Great Depression. House prices continue to plummet. There are so many unknowns for everyone in our community at this from a health perspective and economic perspective. This is not the time to raise taxes and place additional burden on the residents. I propose a freeze of our taxes for the next two years while the pandemic is still ongoing. Give people a chance to land in their feet, so much has changed and so much can still change DO NOT MAKE CHANGE FOR THE WORSE! The town may think that the residents will not reach a point when everyone is fed up with these increases, and just leave the town. I guarantee that if you push the residents of Avon you will see even more people leaving the town and you will place the town in an even worse situation. I know I am not alone in this opinion and respectfully request that the proper consideration be given at this time.

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**20. Lawrence N. & Karin E. Rappaport, 18 Old Mill Road**

Against 5% Increase. Teachers among highest paid in CT. Economy in recession, perhaps heading toward depression. Increase not affordable to struggling homeowners!

**21. Dave Sweitzer, 12 Bluestone Lane**

All, Attached are some thoughts I have put together on the budget, I am sure you are looking at many of these but still wanted to supply some feedback. I know everyone is working very hard to get the adjusted budget as close to a zero increase on the mill rate as possible. Not an easy task with all the uncertainties we are dealing with. Hope this helps, thanks for all the hard work on this.

***Avon Budget Questions:***

Goal, how to not increase mill rate on town, the 3.47% to 34.04 increase will have a large impact on many of our residents. Not sure what the number is but I know we have had folks leaving our town. We should work to reduce this to draw in instead of out. There is no reason why we should be increase budget over last year with the current economic crisis hitting our country and state.

**1. 2019-2020 Budget**

- a. Are we on budget?
- b. Temp Teacher and other cost not needed when schools are closed
- c. BOE cafeteria Sales, example of loss rev
- d. Athletic Game receipts
- e. What is the “uncollectable” bad debit of \$505K, and why is this being carried over to the next budget, show be written off as bad debt expense, especially if we have any non-used rev from current budget.
  - i. What have been the steps to collect? (taxes on foreclosures)
- f. If not are we over or under, under could offset some increases on expense and rev

**2. 2020-2021**

- a. How is the group looking at the financial impact on the back half of the current budget for second qtr. of 2020?
- b. What is their forecast methodology for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter impact, will be a slow start up based on 25-50%.
- c. Can I get a line item detail on the budget roll ups?
- d. Avon’s new starting point should be 2019-2020 budget or lower and work backwards on expense to match rev
- e. How much of an adjustment have you seen on the rev side due to economic down fall on local bus challenge business

**Rev Questions:**

**1. Charges for Services**

- a. What is at risk of not producing valid rev
  - i. i.e. swim fees
  - ii. BOE cafeteria Sales, will impact current and potentially 1<sup>st</sup> half of new budget
  - iii. Athletic Game receipts, will impact current and potentially 1<sup>st</sup> half of new budget
  - iv. Any risk of Sewer use charge changing will all the closed business.

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- b. What makes up “Other Local Revenues”
  - 2. **“Intergovernmental Revenues”**
    - a. What is the make-up of “Intergovernmental Revenues”?
    - b. Is this still legitimate revenue for our budget
  - 3. **Nonvalid Rev categories – What is at risk of not producing expected rev?**
- Expenditures Questions:**
- 1. **Town Council**
    - a. Any raises should be frozen, on increase going into 2020-2021
    - b. Human resources should be capped to 2019-2020
    - c. Finance
      - i. What is the breakdown of this category, if salary based should be frozen as well.
  - 2. **Public Safety – Would not touch**
  - 3. **Recreations and Parks**
    - a. Recreations - Need to be realistic here, we should either reduce by 50% knowing that rec will not open this summer
    - b. Parks – do not increase, and should look at cutting cost by 50%
  - 4. **Culture & Education**
    - a. Need to reduce this cost by 50%, again impact for first half of 2020-2021
  - 5. **Conservation & Development**
    - a. Cap at 2019-2020 expense, no increase in new budget
    - b. Con of Natural Resources, no increase in new budget
  - 6. **Misc.**
    - a. What is the purpose of this category?
  - 7. **Sewers**
    - a. What is driving the 18% increase over last year’s budget
    - b. \$436K
  - 8. **Capital Improvement Program – UP 26% over last year budget - \$746K**
    - a. We should look at all capital projects and deem what is critical and non-critical
    - b. All non-critical projects should be pushed out until follow budget
  - 9. **Board of Ed – this is the difficult one – again essential to non-essential – Should try to push increase out on later year in contract**
    - a. Are raises contract through union
      - i. Any provision on raises being cap related to economic crises-this could be pushed to later years in the contract or even add a year to contract
    - b. Other purchased Services – would like to see a line item break down of this to review criticality of expense
    - c. Cafeteria operations, zero cost last 4 months of this year, should not be part of school union contract
    - d. General Supplies should come down in the last 4 months of current budget

**22. Beth and Tom Mango, 60 Briar Hill Road**

To the Members of the Avon Board of Finance, I am writing to you to express our family's support of the proposed, 2020-21 Avon Board of Education budget. We have been residents of Avon since 2006, and like so many other families and families-to-be, we chose this wonderful town nearly 14 years ago based largely on the quality and ongoing commitment to excellence

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in its public schools. It helped bring us here, and it has been integral to keeping us here. With three of our four children currently in the school system (and our youngest entering Kindergarten at Roaring Brook School this fall), we care deeply about the educational experience not only for our children, but every child in this town. We are proud to send our children to Avon Public Schools, grateful for the experience they have had, and committed to continuing to give our time and energy in many volunteer capacities for years to come. Considering the unprecedented challenges we are all facing, most notably in the educational experience of our children, **we firmly believe this is not the time to reduce the funding and resources that will prove so vital to restoring our schools and our students' educational experience and well-being upon their return.** We support the proposed 2020-21 BOE budget, and thank you for your consideration.

**23. Michele O'Connor, 116 Northgate**

I am sending this message in support of the budget increase that the BOE has presented. I think it's fair to say that no one in town wishes to have their taxes increased at this time but neither do we want our students to be in classrooms that are over-crowded. I am fairly active in the school and have been part of meetings where funding for staffing and programs are thoroughly discussed. I have found the board and Dr. Carnemolla to be very conscious of the differences between the wants and needs of the schools. The increase that has been proposed, while more than in the past, reflects the needs of an influx of younger students. I believe the Board of Finance should also consider that there will soon be additional funds the required to accommodate the new demands of Covid. Not approving the current request will only make our situation worse. Thank you for your consideration.

**24. Steven Hess, 153 Burnham Road**

To whom it may concern, I read in the Town of Avon newsletter that a tax increase of 4.02% was being proposed and was actually stunned. It is beyond my comprehension that the elected officials are proposing a tax increase. When I started reading the newsletter I was expecting at a minimum the Town would keep the budget for 2020/2021 at break even. Surrounding Towns are doing just that. We are in the midst of a pandemic and my expectation is it will be affecting the economy for the next 6-12 months. The economy is NOT going to spring back, people are going to be hurting for a period of time into 2021. And now, the Town of Avon is going to make it hurt even more. This is irresponsible.

***\*\*The following comments were received after the May 4<sup>th</sup> BOF Special Meeting\*\****

**25. Wanda Dawicyk, 54 Anvil Drive**

Thank you all for the work you did to get the budget where it is. This is the tough part of the job. As an Avon Resident, I have seen my taxes double in the 11 years I have lived here. We moved to Avon instead of Simsbury because the taxes were much more reasonable and made housing affordable. In this time, I have seen many house that would support families be built that should be bringing in more tax revenue to include the one off houses like on Huckleberry and Hollister as well as the huge neighborhood at the top of Northington. I also saw us vote down a development that would bring in less families and support those who may be downsizing to stay in Avon. Thinking long term, we need our tax basis to go up and we need to continuously look for efficiencies. Here are my thoughts to efficiencies, they may be off base, you don't know the job unless you are in it but from the outside, this is some of what I see:



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Overall:

When there is a surplus of budget, it goes back to the town and used for the highest priority items for the town. There should be an incentive to do better so we don't have a spend it or lose it mentality. Losing the monies because we don't need them should be what we strive for, not spending even if we didn't need to in order to justify the number next year.

Town Budget:

- Library HVAC is extremely expensive and no doubt a great system but there must be something that can be done that will work for less than 1.3 Million.
- A temporary measure, as COVID has hit us all, have we furloughed or had people moved to 50% as they are unable to perform their functions? This is tough one, but I will tell you I have countless friends who are now part time, or furloughed to save the company.
- Public Safety Radio System hasn't made progress given the location of the tower and other factors, are we rethinking that and able to utilize those funds now and put a plan in place to support next year. We should have a surplus.

Board of Ed:

- A temporary measure, as COVID has hit us all, have we furloughed or had people moved to 50% as they are unable to perform their functions? This is tough one, but I will tell you I have countless friends who are now part time, or furloughed to save the company. Think about Athletic Director, Athletic Directory Secretary, library media specialists, etc
- There are 9 custodians, we hire out for a lot of work, can they pick up more of the "handyman" type work that they used to do when I was in school?
- We spend 30k in copier/leases yet I see very little paper coming out of the system with all the technology we have. I am sure that differs by grade/school. Can we get less expensive machines give then decrease in printing needs?
- Supplies: there are more line items than I care to add up for supplies, and the schools approved vendors are very expensive. Can we get a group together to figure out how to cut down on the cost of the supplies? Use different vendors, get items on sale, etc. I am not suggesting we don't need the items, I am suggesting we pay a premium for every item we get and likely isn't needed for everything.
- Fees/Memberships, about 30k of these, need to ask what our benefit from them are. Maybe it is worth it but need to think about that cost. I would prefer to see a teacher/support staff than pay for fees for something we don't really need
- Transportation: a large portion of the budget, can we ask parents to opt out of the bus if they don't want it, then we won't need to include them in the routes, our buses are running pretty empty. Can we look at consolidating the bus stops? The more consolidated the less time on the bus and the more kids we can get to school quicker. There are regulations on how long in time routes can be, if we make the routes with less stops, we can fill the bus, get kids to school and save.
- AD Secretary – do we need one?
- Teacher union contracts, can we negotiate a little less generous next time. Fact is, we can never pay teachers enough for what they do but our budget can only handle so much and our staff is some of the highest paid teachers in the area.

I know it isn't easy but I also know our town and schools can be more efficient and creative because we have wonderful people working them. The teachers and town will have many more efficiency ideas I am sure! Thank you for your time, those are some of my thoughts.

**26. Pamela Cunningham, 18 Berkshire Crossing**

Last night multiple members of my household attended the virtual annual town and budget meeting. First, I want to thank all those who made this informative meeting possible and those who presented. It was very helpful to hear explanations of each budgeted item and the process

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behind creating the budget. I appreciate the time and effort each of you has committed to carefully deliberating Avon's budget needs for the upcoming year. I was also happy to see more than 160 residents in attendance. I am submitting this comment in **support** of the proposed budget. I also hope the budget can somehow be implemented without making additional cuts to the BOE budget. I believe it is critical, especially in these uncertain times, to come together as a community to maintain the quality of our town services and public education and to support our town employees and institutions, so I'm willing to accept the proposed modest tax increase to do so. This time will pass, and hopefully we will soon return to a more normal way of life, so it's important for Avon to remain a town with the qualities its residents currently enjoy.

**27. Raj Subbu, 25 Cranbrook**

Dear Board of Finance, A follow up to my April 22, 2020 comments below after reviewing your online posted May 4, 2020 meeting documents. I was glad to see that the vast majority of the taxpayer comments received until April 29, 2020 has been against a tax increase for 2020-2021. Since you have canceled the yearly budget referendum requirement this year due to the Governor's Executive Order-71 in light of Covid-19, my sincere hope is you will also not apply the usual 9% taxpayer quorum requirement, and instead pursue a simple majority approach to the taxpayers presented commentary in regards to the budget. My view is if you apply the 9% quorum requirement for a referendum while simultaneously not holding a referendum, there is the possibility of a legal challenge to any budget increase passed under these circumstances not just for the Town of Avon, but any other town in CT that may have similar circumstances as well. I believe the lowest risk pathway for the Town of Avon in this exceptional year ahead is to hold the 2020-2021 expenses and tax revenues flat with respect to 2019-2020. I hope you will lean strongly towards Scenario-A (0.0% increase) posted on the Town Council website. Thanks in advance for recording the above follow-up commentary.

**28. Ellison Berns, 15 Wilcox Lane**

Congratulations to all who operationalized Monday evening's videoconference of the Board of Finance's special meeting. It is a wonderful way to engage Avon residents in town matters, and I hope it continues. I want to thank all the board members for their efforts to develop a responsible budget during this acute and unprecedented crisis. I previously emailed my opinion and still feel that a 4% budget increase is outrageous when so many in the private sector have seen their business decimated or have been furloughed or laid off. But after listening carefully to Mr. Robertson's clearly presented educational discussion about the mechanics of a town budget, especially his concern about rating agencies, I have changed my opinion slightly. I agree with Ms. Bratton who said that it is the Board's difficult task to determine how to tax and spend its citizen's money that pays for our town's vital functions. The BOE is a component of our town, not a deity unto itself. I favor Scenario B EXCEPT for the reserve fund to loan \$500,000 to the budget with the hope that the BOE realizes a \$500,000 surplus at year's end. Hope is not a strategy, and it is too easy to live by an old budget credo: use it or lose it. It sounded as though there may be areas of savings that have yet to be explored (I think I heard travel, copiers, and a costly heat pump for the library) in order to reach the goal of reducing Avon's total budget. It should not be assumed that the unions would not cede to its *members'* wishes, which hopefully might include delay or reduction of scheduled pay increases for its rank and file that would help balance the proposed budget. The optics of the "public sector"

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

getting raises well above the COL while the “private sector” sees flat or no increases is a terrible one. Yes, credit to all budget line items, like BOE or police or fire departments or assessor’s office, should be catalogued for future budget increases if dollars allow in gratitude for their budget cutting efforts now. Finally, as a taxpayer, we too should contribute to the effort by supporting the proposed small increase in taxes as a show of solidarity dealing with this financial crisis, reaching a balanced budget, and demonstrating to rating agencies our fiscal responsibility.

**29. Thomas and Tracy Gens, 15 Brighton Way**

Hello, It’s my understanding that property taxes are to be raised again soon and you are accepting comments until May 11. I absolutely have to state our disagreement to this. Not to mention the ridiculous timing of it with COVID, have you noticed that above average housing prices in Avon have plummeted by close to 40% in the neighborhoods that already pay the most taxes? This is from build prices over the last 5-15 years. Many parts of the country have doubled real estate values in that same timeframe. How much of a hit are we expected to take? Maybe the people who move in see a great steal – but many of them don’t even take care of their lawns. How much longer do you think this can continue? Even with the continual decline in our home value we have enjoyed living in Avon since 2007, but like many are contemplating leaving. I’m not looking for justifications or rationalizations, just a reduction in property taxes. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

**30. Barbara Upton / Suzanne Rogers, 6 Parkview Drive**

EO 71 doesn't give you carte blanche to do anything you want. This proposed budget is absolutely outrageous considering you're presentation is for just under a 4.5 million dollar increase over last year's budget and the largest increase in 8 years. At a time like this, shame on you. Your main focus of increase is not even aimed at things that would be of benefit to the general public of Avon as a whole but towards Board of Ed. salaries and Employee Benefits. This is a total of just under 2.4 million and while education is important, it's not the most important budget item, especially when thousands upon thousands of people in this state, AND THIS TOWN, are out of work with no income and no benefits of any kind. Again, shame on you! You have allocated increases to Public Safety, Public Works and Health & Social Services combined of just under \$919,000.00 These 3 departments benefit every citizen of Avon and this increase represents the entire department costs not just employee salaries and benefits, As I have said before, shame on you! In our present environment you must realize that numerous small businesses have had to close due to Covid-19. Some may not survive and those that do come back will be struggling for many months ahead. Any tax increase will surely have an effect in their decision making and Avon cannot afford this kind of loss. We have the Whole Foods complex in the making and we need to make it attractive for businesses to consider coming to Avon, which means you need to make appropriate decisions in our tax base. This beautiful town should not only be affordable to the upper class but also to every income group. A strong consideration for our senior citizens who are on very fixed incomes needs to be included in your budget process, as these individuals have always been the backbone of this town and yet seem to be the most neglected. Zero Budget or, even better, BUDGET CUTS should be the first priority if, in fact, you are working in the best interests of the citizens of Avon. The majority of people have been adversely affected by Covid-19 and have had to make many decisions on cutting their own individual expenditures. Avon NEEDS to do the same.

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

If you are truly working for the good of Avon and ALL of its people, you will certainly work harder in controlling this budget, now and in the future. If not, SHAME ON YOU!

**31. Raymond and Carol Griffin, 95 Haynes Road**

In view of the situation with the pandemic and everyone's decreased income associated with it, I think that the Town of Avon should follow the lead of other towns and cities and pass a budget with ZERO increase. Certainly NO funds for improvement of athletic fields or lighting of any type for athletic events. There are decreased services being offered for education, recreational, library services, etc. These should be reflected by a decrease in spending. Recognize the facts of today's situation and let the budget reflect those realities and show either a ZERO increase or a decrease. Help the citizens put food on their tables and keep their homes.

**32. David Karimedдини, MD, 49 Anvil Drive**

Dear Board Members, In these unprecedented times, all municipalities throughout the country are experiencing healthcare, social, and most importantly economic impacts. Due to the high rates of unemployment, the mill rate should NOT be increased this fiscal year. The budget should SHRINK in response to our current circumstances. I plead with the members to use common sense and compassion in these critical decisions that will effect our community.

**33. Jaclyn Pare, 75 Old Wood Road**

To Whom it May Concern, I am an Avon resident with three children at Pine Grove School in the fall. I support the needs of our education system and am concerned that residents have not been told what sacrifices would be made to our schools with a 0% budget increase. Please provide specifics on what will be eliminated from our schools to achieve the \$267,000 in additional reductions. Residents should be aware of the sacrifices to our school system. Thank you.

**34. Chris & Jodi Hyers, 11 Hollister Drive**

We appreciate the time and deliberation the Board of Finance is giving to the next budget and the need for a tax increase, but we write today to strongly oppose any rate increase. As good as the reasons and projects needing funding might be, the time is not right. The unexpected impact of COVID on personal and business finances will be felt for a long time to come. Impacts of job and revenue loss will ripple for a long time to come - we are all making hard decisions about what we can afford and how we can support others. Our focus as a community, and yours as leadership, should be to do as civic leaders what we are all doing as families and business leaders - figuring out how to do with less, setting aside that things that felt like priorities just a few weeks ago and focusing on the recovery of our community and the businesses that are it's backbone. Return to the proposal next year, this is not the right time.

**35. Joe Scatchell, 15 Thornwood Lane**

Dear Finance Committee and Board of Education; I'm not sure you read the room yet so let me throw my thoughts in. You cannot justify any increase in taxes. The fiscally damaging teacher union contracts will continue to do harm to Avon's (and all Connecticut towns) ability to provide other services. Those contracts are at the heart of the insatiable thirst for more revenue. Avon needs revenue to have sufficient police and fire protection; the only essential items for

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

which a government is required. The school board will have to find a way to accommodate their teachers and administrators. The teachers and administrators need to choose if they want nice buildings, materials, more in-service days etc. or if they want exorbitant salaries and benefits. Now is a perfect time for them to live up to their statements that their students are the most more important thing. Those students are or will be taxpayers too. Is you, making well above the median incomes of those you serve putting them first? As for an idea - How about requiring all teachers and administrators to reside in Avon.

**36. L. Kenney, 44 Country Club Road**

Good Evening - We have had a house in town for almost 15 years. We had the misfortune of buying here right before the real estate bubble burst. We then watched as, within about the first 7 years, our taxes in Avon went up 25% from where they were when we bought. 25%! I did not complain because I wanted this school district. We wanted the 'services', which we are charged extra for anyway. I thought the house will regain its value. Well, it hasn't. Fast forward to today and as was the case back then, we are far from wealthy and continue to work long hours at demanding jobs. We are now doing so at home while our two school age children are home with us. While we have had children in the schools since 2013/14, and support the schools in any way we can, this nonsense about an increase this year driven by increasing salaries, hiring new school staff and other "expenses", is where I draw the line. In the nearly two months since we have been home with kids home in lockdown, the Avon teachers have had spring break (I note we did not get any break here whatsoever) and have been assured the school year will end "on time". It was also at least two weeks from the start of the quarantine before we had any structured lessons sent home to us. TWO WEEKS If not more. PLUS SPRING BREAK off. Are you getting the picture now As to why a tax increase this year is completely tone deaf? And unless you aren't paying attention, you know that we as parents are not going to get a summer break either, as most camps are and should be closed for the duration. That is, no break unlike the teachers who will be off for three months will. We will be working all summer with the same two kids home, and at that, with no homework at all. Furthermore since the start of this quarantine, our two children have had less than four face to face sessions with their core class teachers each. That is it. In TWO MONTHS. And of those four, most were intended to be "social" meaning no actual instruction whatsoever. And so you see our very expensive teachers have had to do almost no one-on-one teaching to their classes in two months. None whatsoever. We parents and taxpayers are doing it while working our 60+ hour a week jobs. I hear the special needs kids are getting some instruction one-on-one. But it's not happening with the kids in this house. And it's pretty darn upsetting. You may find the tone dramatic. But I'd also like to point out that, to further add to this stress in this house, we are now fairly behind on our work required for our jobs and now are both in real jeopardy of losing these all-important jobs altogether in the near future. My company is not going to be announcing the exact layoff plans until July, by which point the mill rate increase in Avon will be in the books. We are not the only family in town with this concern currently I can assure you. (I note many on your board are at or near retirement age. Are your homes paid for? Kids done with college? Are you still paying for their health insurance? Paying your life insurance off? on top of a hefty mortgage? I wonder.) So for us, as you can imagine, starting from a point of being far from wealthy amongst some wealth here in town, we now live in fear of any new bills, let alone increases to existing ones. And to listen on May 4th as the School board asked for \$1.3M more for two kindergarten teachers' salaries...? That was

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

for me, the straw that broke our tired backs. We didn't buy some big expensive house, but you have ensured that it has since become extremely expensive. Whatever excess income we have has gone into keeping it sound and just plain hanging on to it. The prospect of the latter is dim if either of us is unemployed. We need a break Avon. Now. Not next year not two years from now. Right now. You as a town have stood by and let rampant residential building happen which will lead to the need for more school space and school building in the very near future. And as such, that will lead to a LARGE increase in the mill rate at some future point to fund the school expansion. I cannot be the only person who sees this coming...yet I never hear this notion uttered on your calls or those of the zoning board or the BOE. Textbook shortsighted expansion. You should note that the schools are already bursting here and YET the town has in the last year allowed hundreds of new apartments to be built. Hundreds! Apartments that will largely mean renters, not owners. Renters = Zero help with the taxes and by extension zero help with the cost of the schools. Even if they are taxpayers it spells a space shortage in Avon schools immediately. In addition, in Simsbury with their thousands of new apartments more than 27 families with special needs kids have moved in before the building is done and the paint is dry. All of which will be a huge cost to its taxpayers. Expect to see that here as well, as Avon has set the stage for it. Again, please **wake up**. No tax increase this year. As pertains your concern over the all-consuming bond rating, that will be back up to current level in no time after the virus is in check. By the way, if the town would see fit to stop letting the Zoning Commission approve massive commercial building here, requiring a perfect bond rating in order that you can back up your contractors bond carrier, I would bet you the rating for the town may be somewhat less critical right now. How about trying to clean up what is already here before approving more apartments more development, more useless spending? One break will not make or break your rating and yet would go a long way to acknowledging your citizens are carrying a lot of the burden for the highest ticket item in town this year - the schools.

**37. Barbara Keiser, 15 Mountain Laurel Lane**

Avon Board of Finance, I have lived in Avon for 38 years and my children went through the Avon Public Schools. Having Reviewed the proposed budget sent to residents in the Town of Avon Newsletter, I find that the 4.68% budget increase is unrealistic in these troubled times. Many of Avon's residents are struggling because of the unprecedented ramifications of the COVID-19 virus. This is not the time for such a substantial increase. Town employees should not be given a pay increase during this budget cycle. Employee's jobs have been secure while so many others have applied for unemployment. Avon's residents should continue to expect quality services for their tax dollar, but now is not the time for any increase. Surrounding towns are proposing no increase or minimal and that should be the same for Avon. As presented, I would reject this budget and recommend that a concerted effort be made to prepare a more realistic budget for consideration by the Avon taxpayer.

**38. Brynn Mandel, 35 Chevas Road**

Dear Board of Finance officials, I am writing to urge you to **reject any proposal for a 0-percent-increase budget, and to implore you to not undercut our fine educational system by throwing it backwards at this critical time.** Instead, I beseech you to **support a special fund for education at this time.** We sit at a critical juncture for not only students and educators, but also for families who rely on schools to educate our young citizens, to engage

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

them with the outside world that has been all too distant of late *AND* to ultimately allow many parents to resume work, or a hopeful return to work this fall. We don't know exactly fall will look like for schools - **but we know that it will not be business as usual. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the school system has all the resources and support it needs to meet the behemoth challenges** - from logistics of possibly staggered days, to smaller class sizes to supporting socioemotional development and learning needs of our next generation. This is no time to essentially cut educational funding - which you and I both know is what a 0-percent budget does to schools that have not only contractual and mandated obligations, but also increasing needs and services delivered in unconventional ways. This does not even account for whatever unexpected bumps in the road we have yet to envision. This is no time to back away from our commitment to educators who will undoubtedly be asked to return to school buildings (and unfortunately before a virus vaccine) to serve the needs of the community in new and unprecedented ways. For the sake and safety of our children and the greater good our community, this is no time to shortchange or cut corners with schools. We CAN meet this challenge in creative ways - without literally overtaxing stretched taxpayers. As an educator in a neighboring town, I know that the schools have saved a hefty sum this budget cycle by virtue of having all buildings closed since March - operating costs such as heating and electricity have saved the district (and by extension town's buildings, as well), from what I have heard, hundreds of thousands of dollars - I have heard the figure \$700,000 saved by the schools alone in Avon, and this does not even include town buildings. **I would like to see that saved money returned to the school budget for next fiscal year to ensure that our schools can readily adapt to and react to whatever challenges arise come fall.** As a parent, I have watched our son's wonderful teacher at Roaring Brook School embrace and support him and his classmates to keep them learning and progressing. She has worked tirelessly and selflessly, as most educators have, defaulting to an overtime mode that extends well beyond the demands of a typical school day's usual confines. This is no time to heap more on our educators by asking schools to do even more - as fall will likely bring - with less. Furthermore, I understand that the library heating and cooling system issue still needs resolution and that there are two options on the table - one that replaces the costly and faulty geothermal system with a similar one, and another that switches to conventional HVAC at a lower cost to the tune of savings of around a half-million dollars. In tight budget times, this move to conventional HVAC makes fiscal sense, rather than proceeding with another system similar to that which has proven problematic. **These precious saved dollars can be directed to areas they will make the greatest impact on lives and people in town - including adequately funding the educational system.** At a time when teachers and educators have stepped up, it is not a moment to back away from our support of them and our schools. I have faith that you will do what is right for our children, our educators, our families, and our community.

**39. Thomas J. Kuczora, 171 High Ridge Road**

Dear Board of Finance, In the past seven weeks 33,500,000 Americans lost their jobs and the losses will continue to increase. Unemployment is now around 20% and is expected to grow. All non-essential businesses have closed indefinitely. Companies that offer investors a dividend have suspended these payments. Airlines have reduced their flight schedules by 90%. The Oil Industry is paralyzed because it cost more to pump a barrel out of the ground than they can sell it for. Exploration is on hold, projects are being cancelled throwing

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

thousands more out of work. I can go on and on about the harsh economic conditions the world is going through now. I'm lucky. I still have my job. But my company, as most, have had to make adjustments to the current environment. These steps include:

1. My salary has been reduced by 10% for at least the remainder of 2020
2. My hours have been reduced to 36 hr./week. Another 10% cut in wages
3. I will not see the merit increase this year for my 2019 accomplishments
4. I will not receive the bonus I earned for my 2019 accomplishments (paid in 2020)
5. I will be furloughed two weeks in 2020
6. My company initiated a hiring freeze
7. My company cancelled contracts with all outside consultants
8. My company had to lay off people, but these shared sacrifices kept that number to a minimum.

All businesses have had to react to the current economic situation by making cuts to spending and tightening their belts. BUT, in the fairy tale land of Avon, CT it's business as usual and then some with budget proposals that increase spending by 4.68% I assume you could not secure a position on the Board of Finance without an extensive background in the field. Does the Board not feel the least bit embarrassed by not being able to recognize and make a course correction for what is happening in the world, and not having the skills to come up with a budget that would not call for an increase in taxes? I urge the Board to challenge their skills and have the courage to make the tough decisions that leaders make in turbulent times. Things are far from being "Business as usual".

**40. Kent Jamison, 3 Alder Lane**

Thank you for all the work you've done. Truly. I was one of the 134 callers who hung in there until the bitter end. A great, clear, concise presentation by all as always. And by the way, thanks always for tax relief for seniors, it helps. I recommend you keep the tax increase to zero. I am sympathetic to the concern over a cliff next year and a \$44 dollar annual increase really isn't that much but sometimes you just have to opt for the optics and set aside prudence. Having said that I agree with the committee member who said the budget should be viewed over the next two years, not one. This email will share my thinking in the hopes it provides some wisdom to those of you making the hard choices, and the harder ones yet to come. First of all in pragmatic terms, we need tax relief now. The pandemic has come out of the blue. You have a \$100 million budget to play with and make adjustments. The taxpayer, even middleclass ones, have fewer options. You have a longer time frame. The furloughed taxpayer has to figure out what bills to pay tomorrow probably within a limited budget. (And by the way, many seniors who are secure themselves now find themselves helping out sons or daughters who have lost work.) The way I think about the budget two sacred cows have to be punctured. The first one is preserving the town's pristine bond rating. Remember, all municipalities are facing this calamity. As I see it, all will move down a notch or two, some more than others. Relatively speaking, cliff or not, I suspect Avon will remain highly rated even if you have to dip into the unassigned fund balance. Besides, interest rates are incredibly low and expected to remain low so any impact of a lower bond rating would be minimal. The other sacred cow that needs to be punctured is the School Budget. I have had little sympathy with the Board of Ed budget even before the virus. I moved to Farmington Woods four years ago from Canton where I can remember the school budget was being stretched to provide a third year of Spanish. Something I doubt the Avon BofE cannot even relate to. Also, my



**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

daughter and her family live in New Haven. I get an earful about the New Haven schools: Of elementary school libraries being locked because they can't afford a school librarian. Of schools not affording a school nurse, so if a kid scrapes their knee on the playground they have to be transported to a school that has one. As far as I am concerned the Board of Ed can dig deeper. I also question the wisdom of preserving only those things that "directly affect student education and cutting what I guess might be labeled the "infrastructure". I am sure whatever cuts are made, Avon will continue to have an exemplary school system. I had some concern over what was not in the budget. I would have liked to have heard that we were doing something more than a thank you for our first responders, police, emts, janitors, food handlers and such (the infrastructure?) who are literally risking their lives for us. They truly deserve hazard pay, not just a yard sign 'Thank You.' This is our time to act. As a citizen and taxpayer I need you to do what I cannot do alone to let these people know we fully appreciate what they are doing. It is a new world. Another thing I did not hear in the BofE presentation was an increased need for tutors, or one-on-one instruction for those students who fell behind with at-home online schooling, some like my ADHD nine year old granddaughter, or families whose parents were working at home and struggling to home school multiple kids. In thinking two years out, my advice is to be prepared for the Grand list to shrink, not increase. Keep your powder dry, there are even bigger challenges coming next year. This is a time for democracy to shine not shirk. You are doing important work. Thanks for listening.

**41. Claire Henderson, 1 Keystone Circle**

I listened to all comments made by board members and our town manager on Monday evening and understand the very difficult position all are in regarding the upcoming fiscal year. Despite the pain, my position has not changed. I still feel there should be no tax increase for the upcoming fiscal year. I also feel the unassigned fund balance should be used only up to the point it will not exceed 1.3 million. The two boards should find the necessary cuts so that the future is not in a deep hole. Everyone is feeling pain and it should be equally spread. I look forward to listening on May 11 and trust that the Board of Finance will do the right thing.

**42. James Fitzgerald, 25 Kenington Road**

Dear Mr. Chairman - BOF, Board of Finance Members, Town Council Chair, and Town Council Members; I cannot stress enough the extreme and severe condition of our local economic situation. I am sure you all are aware of it. I have never seen the likes of what is being experienced today by so many people in and around our community, going from positive to the negative side, nearly overnight, wreaking havoc on the lives of these families and individuals, just trying to stay afloat. As elected officials, this is the one time, and possibly more to come, when you just have to say no, stop the spending, do everything to maintain the necessities for essential needs. We all hope this will blow over, but what we do not know is how long before there is a positive turn. Individuals should not be required to pay increased taxes. As it stands now, families are trying to put food on their tables, maintain a sense of security, and hope for a return to employment and a sustainable livelihood. If there is no income, there will be revenue collection issues, and for 12 to 24 months, it may be dire. It will be a new, post Covid-19 world, and there is no road-map yet, indicating how we will all live, work, school, and socialize. I do hope that you will be supporting a budget with a significant decrease. There is no just cause for any increase for the next fiscal year. Too many people, small businesses, and those on fixed incomes cannot afford the luxuries in the proposed budget.

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

The food banks are supporting hundreds of people. All boards must come to grips with the dire situation we in this community, as well as the whole US, are facing. Consider that, no transportation, and I assume no secretaries, nurses, custodians have been on the job since March, in the schools. Therefore the spending must have been reduced from a BOE position by nearly 25%, at a minimum. With no sports, no extracurricular activity, there must be a significant surplus from the BOE that will be available for the coming year. The town roads and essential services should be supported. Raises should not be granted, all should be on hold until there is a positive economic turn. We cannot afford anything other than a decrease in the entire budget. I ask you all to support a budget with a significant reduction and ensure a reduction in the mill rate. Thank you.

**43. James and Patricia Salvador, 10 Cavendish Place**

Dear Board of Finance, For reasons that sadly obvious, we respectfully request that Scenario A be your choice for the next town budget. Many thanks for your diligent hard work in keeping the finances in check.

**44. Neil Livingston, 120 Craigmere Circle**

RE: Capital Budget Projects 2020 - 2021 (\$3,569,955)

Can you justify/explain why each Capital Project currently in the 2020 - 2021 Budget can not be delayed into the future. Delaying all Capital Budget Projects into the future would more than cover the \$2.9 million Brandon Robertson stated he needed to support a "ZERO" increase in the Mill Rate. There is nothing in the Avon Charter that dictates the Town Budget and BOE budget must be handled by forcing reductions on a 30%/70% Split (Town/BOE).

The recommendation above would mean:

- Avon's Reserve (\$11+ million would not be touched)
- All employee contracts could be honored.

**45. Dawn Zavalishin, 135 Northgate**

In favor of .52 BOE budget. Please do not cut our budget for the Board of Education! As TBS PTO President, I'm in school every week. They need more funding if anything to manage.

**46. George Michailow, 73 Chevas Road**

I would like to thank all the departments that have come together to realize that a increase right now would add stress and strife to the residents of Avon. One thing I noticed at the last meeting is that you seem not to acknowledge that it is our money! Yes we have trusted you to manage our funds. I think you can do more to help the seniors in town with raising the maximum income to \$100,000 for a couple. I think that the residents should have a say in what the slush fund should be used for, I can't think of what catastrophe could happen where we would need \$10,000,000. I didn't like the BOF comment that they will decide about the increase and they are the final word, again it is our money not yours! The BOF needs an attitude change. Finally I would like to know who had the final approval to send out the budget increase flyer, what a major mistake, and don't use the excuse that it was from April, you referenced the virus in the beginning of the flyer. Finally this will not be forgotten for a long time and your departments will be closely monitored in the future.

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

**47. Ann La Tour, 19 Holly Lane**

Dear Avon Board of Finance Members, As a resident of Avon with two children in Avon Public Schools, I am writing to you to consider the wishes of your constituents when deciding the budget. I chose to buy a house in Avon because of the excellent education system and the fact that Avon has always passed each budget to provide schools with the money they need to support their students. In these unprecedented times, students are going to be coming to school with more needs and the schools will need the staff and faculty resources to support the town's students. Please consider using some of the reserve funds to support the town budget next year while taking the time to see if money is saved from the cancellation of spring and summer activities. I would also support a tax increase in order to fully fund the Avon Board of Education budget for next year.

**48. Kelly McQueeney, 14 Hemlock Lane**

Dear Board of Finance Members: I am writing to you as a concerned resident, a parent and an employee of Avon Public Schools. I have regularly attended the BOE meetings and most recently the Avon Town Council and Board of Finance meetings regarding the pending budget. I became very alarmed at the most recent BOF meeting on May 4th, in which two scenarios (A and B) were presented, both of which show the BOE taking on approximately 70% of the reductions needed for the town to reach their ideal budget for 2020-2021. Our superintendent, Dr. Carnemolla, and the BOE, have worked very hard to further reduce next year's school budget by \$378,000. In my opinion, Dr. Carnemolla and the BOE have already made quite a significant reduction to the school budget, while trying to maintain the least impact possible to the students. To ask the BOE to further reduce the budget by an additional \$267,000 will have a devastating and a long lasting impact on our schools and most importantly the students. I moved to Avon with my family over ten years ago. We fell in love with the Farmington Valley. We had three young sons at that time and after much research, we decided to live in Avon, primarily because of the strength of the school district. Since moving here, I have observed that the common practice every budget year is to force the BOE to take on the brunt of reduction cuts for the town budget. As a resident of the town of Avon, I am angry, as a parent, I am deeply concerned, and as an employee, I am scared, not for myself, but for the students I serve. For a town that prides itself on its school district, this common practice says otherwise. If you want to maintain a strong community, you must maintain a strong school district. We are all living in an unprecedented time of great stress and uncertainty, but one thing is for CERTAIN - the needs of the students in our district. Currently, students and staff are working very hard to maintain the learning process and it is for CERTAIN, that we will need to support students more than ever next school year. It is for CERTAIN, that each of our schools will require more resources and more staff to help our students to catch up from this challenging and stressful spring. If remote learning continues in the fall, it is for CERTAIN that we will need to invest in better technology resources to ensure that meaningful learning continues in the new school year. Despite the current challenges our community is facing, this is CERTAINLY not the time to further reduce the BOE budget and their ability to meet the needs of the students. I strongly appeal to each of you to accept the BOE budget as it stands, **WITHOUT** the additional reduction of \$267,000.

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

**49. Randi and Buddy Byron, 83 Deepwood Drive**

After reading through the proposed budget for 2021, it occurred to me that there are numerous factors which were not considered before drafting this budget. The obvious one, of course is that we are in a pandemic. Schools are closed which means less electricity usage, less heating usage and no buses traveling our town. The bus drivers are out of work. Are their salaries still being paid by the town? Let's talk about future costs which are in the budget for 2021. Is there any way that we can postpone very high expenses like a fire truck that costs over \$500,000 or the line item for the purchase of a third fully equipped police cruiser? Avon is such a small town. If need be, Avon has always worked with other towns if more emergency assistance is needed. We are living in unprecedented times. Our post pandemic world will be challenging and could be unrecognizable. It is not the time to raise taxes and put an undue pressure on the taxpayers of Avon, many of whom have lost their jobs and have to budget their money to take care of their families. Please be cognizant of these perspectives. Make the moral choice and join other Connecticut towns as they make the prudent decision to not raise taxes for 2021.

**50. Diane S. Hornaday, 515 Huckleberry Hill Road**

Response to comments made at Board of Finance Virtual Budget Hearing

To the Members of the Board of Finance. Thank you for your efforts to prepare a budget for the Town during these difficult times. I also appreciated the Virtual Budget Hearing held on May 4. I will not respond to specifics in the budgets; however, while I know that you had very detailed information and budget books, I was very disappointed in the information provided the residents in the Board of Education presentation. I received the materials via email on the day of the hearing. I think everyone knew with the information coming to us from the Federal and State government that we would not have a public hearing. We should have received the same type of abbreviated, yet more detailed, information from the BOE that we received in April from the Council. There was adequate time to prepare a mailing.

I would like to respond to some of the comments made by members of the Board of Finance and the Town Manager that I heard.

- The 30/70% reduction requests are not based on "tradition"; it is equitable because the division is based on the percentage of the revenues each Board receives. A 50/50 split would place a great burden on the municipal side.
- The work on the geo-thermal system at the Library should proceed as proposed. It is my understanding that we have already made repairs that did not solve the problem. The Town has not had a good history with repairs on our buildings and properties that deal with symptoms and not problems. The long-term cost is ultimately greater.
- Because we have a unified budget, no COVID savings should be "kept by the Board of Education". All revenues coming into the Town should be allocated through our budgetary process. If there are unanticipated shortfalls during the year the Board and Council can ask for additional appropriations. Our financial procedures providing oversight by the Board of Finance, as well as the practice that budgeted funds not expended are returned to the general fund, maintains a degree of accountability we want.
- I endorse the comments made by Margaret Bratton and Cathy Durdan. Many of our friends and neighbors are losing their businesses, being furloughed or let go, or being asked to work at a much reduced salary. It is reasonable to ask our employee groups to freeze salaries for the 20-21 fiscal year.

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- While I would prefer no increase to the mil rate I am supportive of the Town Manager's suggestion/recommendation of Option B. I think it is likely that revenues from commercial properties will go down, and perhaps other losses of revenue, so that we will be in a difficult situation again next year at this time. We may have to go back to the UDF again next year. To take more from that fund this year does not seem prudent.

Thank you for your time reading my response.

**51. David Cunningham, 18 Berkshire Crossing**

To the Avon CT Board of Finance: I write to express my full support for the proposed town and school budgets. It is critical that the schools in particular be able to adequately provide a high level of education to our students. Cuts in the school budget and programs can have long lasting negative effects on the schools, Avon residents and the town itself. Thank you for your consideration.

**52. Robyn Kessler, 40 Avonridge**

As a parent of 2 children in the school system, I am pleading with you! Please do not make any more cuts to our schools. Our schools are fantastic and our kids have been through so much this spring. Their mental health is of the utmost importance, and keeping things consistent is crucial. Any additional cuts will decimate the schools that we will hopefully be returning to in the fall. While raising taxes is not a popular stance, these are unprecedented times. Please consider what is best for our students and do the right thing!

**53. Wendy Honiss-Bourget, 7 Andrea Lane**

To Whom It May Concern: I am writing to ask you to please preserve the education budget. While I no longer have children in the public schools, I am very much concerned about the value of my property. People move to Avon because of our schools. With a down turn in the real-estate market sure to follow this pandemic, we should be preserving and building our greatest asset, our schools, not cutting from it. In addition, there should be a significant saving as a result of the early closing of the schools and reduced town services. This should be calculated and applied to the upcoming budget. Any additional funds needed should be taken from the emergency fund. Coronavirus is the once in a 100 year emergency! Please do not cut the education budget. Thank you.

**54. Stuart Noyes, 3 Clearwater Court**

Town Council / Board Of Finance, As it relates to the proposed 4.68% increase in spending- \$4.46 million - (actually 5.52% increase in actual spending given the \$800k debt service decrease – so \$5.26 million). Does the Council feel it makes good business sense to increase spending and operate in a normal manner when our Country / State is facing unparalleled times ahead for many Americans? I am sure I don't need to remind you over 25 million people have lost their jobs in the last 5 weeks. It would seem that the Leadership's / Counsel's proposal seems insensitive to the current state of the Economy and seemingly at odds with the present situation. Mr. Harrison makes sense in his proposals (.00 or a .52 % tax increase) given the current state of our Economy. I do appreciate the work and effort all members provide and thank each of you.

**Public Comments received after 12:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> through Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon for Budget Workshop, May 11, 2020**

**55. Nancy and Bud Usich, 59 High Wood Drive**

Finance Board: We are all well aware of the fact inflation and cost of living indices are at all-time low. It would be nice if the Town Council could maintain a max proposed tax increase in line with these latter mentioned numbers. The prepared tax increase is simply too much. There must be some economies to be found to reduce the proposed tax increase as submitted. Please look long and hard to find them.

**56. Nicole Farraye Gresh, 94 Woodford Hills Drive**

Dear Members of the Board of Finance, I fully support the proposed BOE 2020-2021 budget. I have lived in this town for over 45 years, wearing many hats as a graduate of AHS, a parent of children who have attended APS, and presently a teacher at AMS. This community is defined by its quality education system and town services, and I am well aware of the associated costs. Excellence is expensive. I know the Superintendent and the Board of Education has thoroughly evaluated and streamlined costs so that students can experience this excellent education. To compete with surrounding towns, Avon must continue to invest in our schools and town services in order to maintain its allure and attract families to patron local businesses. Thank you for your service to this town!

**57. Gene Macy, 269 Arch Road**

Dear Mr. Harrison, I am a resident and taxpayer of Avon, as well as an employee and 25 year teacher in town, and my grandchildren attend Roaring Brook School. So, I have three perspectives on the wellbeing and future of Avon.

First, I support the remarks of Brandon Robertson at the April 27 Board of Finance meeting where he emphasized the three variables, or “legs of the stool,” in looking at the big picture of the town budget. It seems very sensible and clear that as a community we must draw from all three financial options to navigate through these challenges, including a small tax increase, manageable and reasonable reductions in town and school operating costs, and a meaningful withdrawal from the Unassigned Fund Balance.

Second, I support Dr. Carnemolla in her remarks at the same 4/27 meeting. For example, the savings realized this Spring as a result of distance learning should be allowed to help ameliorate next year’s school budget. In addition, she pointed out that there will almost certainly be some added costs next school year due to unfulfilled and yet mandated requirements from this current semester, as well as yet unknown state requirements in public health. Finally, basic factors such as enrollment, class sizes, graduation requirements, and contractual obligations (to name a few) drive most of the Board of Education budget.

In summary, as a town we must strike a balance between being cautious and frugal in these unusual circumstances, while also maintaining a path for our town’s future that preserves and sustains essential and important functions and infrastructure on both the town and school sides of the budget.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks and gratitude to the Board of Finance, Board of Education, Town Council and the many town employees who have all been working so diligently and professionally on behalf of the residents and children of Avon.

**58. Anne O’Brien, 11 Stony Way**

Dear Avon Board of Finance Members, I am writing to implore you to protect funding for our schools. The current crisis has severely affected the ability of Avon children to engage fully in

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the curriculum. Any cuts to the proposed education budget will further undermine the excellent, ongoing efforts of our teachers and staff to serve the diverse needs of their many students, and to remediate the extensive harm done during this unprecedented situation. Left unchecked, this damage will become even more costly and more difficult to address in the years ahead. Hopefully, all monetary savings realized due to the spring closure, along with the excess dollars in our reserve fund, will be employed to resolve the budgetary shortfall, and to protect Avon children from further disastrous academic consequences. To say the very least, this investment will be critical to the future of our schools and our town. Sincere thanks for all that you do on behalf of the residents of Avon. Best wishes for good health and continued success.

**59. Kenna Daly, 23 Cambridge Crossing**

**Option 3: Decrease Taxes. No Use of the Unassigned Fund Balance. Cut Spending.**

With unemployment in the State expected to be 20% or more and in the entire country approaching that of the Great Depression, it is unconscionable to even consider a tax increase. This economic depression will last several years and the Town and especially the BOE must seriously look NOW at the entire budget from scratch. Not just add onto what was in the prior year. There are more cuts to be found and are necessary. Fund what is essential and needed not what is ideal. Businesses and household have to cut spending when faced with no or reduced income to balance their budgets. So must the Town and the BOE. And the Town and BOE need to act responsibly to the taxpayers who are so materially affected. There is not a trough of money out there. The Town and the BOE should expect that many of the local businesses will not survive this situation. What will the Town do then? Raise taxes? The State was in poor condition before the pandemic, never having recovered jobs from the 2008-9 financial crisis. Property values in town have dropped significantly from two decades ago. Store fronts have been empty for years. And more have occurred in the last few months. It looks bleak. But the picture will be worse if the Town and BOE continue to spend and tax the remaining population. The Town and BOE need to fully reexamine line by line the budget and find ways to cut spending. There are always ways to cut spending. And, no, the BOE doesn't get to keep any COVID savings. All savings resulting from spending less due to COVID restrictions must be returned to the taxpayers. If the Town decides on a zero increase in the budget then the savings have to apply to reduce **that** budget. Thus a decrease. Not to shore up a higher budget to make it look better. Option 3 is the only responsible path forward.

**60. Dave**

What happened to the money that was saved from the winter snow removal, since there was relatively minimal snowfall last winter there should be funds remaining? Can we use this to offset the proposed tax increase?

**61. Robert Hayter, 7 Hastings Turn**

Dear Board of Finance: I am writing in support of a no mill rate increase in the upcoming budget. These are unprecedented times. I have lived in Avon for 37 years and have never seen economic times like the present. One quarter of Connecticut's workforce has applied for unemployment benefits. Thousands of small businesses are shuttered. The financial safety net for many of our seniors has been stressed as investments have tanked. Workers not laid off,

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have seen their salaries reduced, raises eliminated and furloughs instituted. If there was ever a time to hold the line on increases, this is it. Thank you for your attention.