

**AVON TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
June 4, 2020**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. via GoToMeeting by Chairperson Maguire. Members present: Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Speich, Polhamus, and Weber. A quorum was present.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson Maguire. She asked everyone to take a moment to reflect on the current situation and pray for those that are hurting, pray for strength, courage and commitment as we go down a journey ahead as a nation, as a State, as a community, as individuals.

Chairperson Maguire noted that a lot has gone on in our world in the last few weeks, the last few months, and in 2020; it has been surreal. She made the following remarks, "I speak for the Town Council and the Avon community when I say that our hearts ache for the family and friends of Mr. George Floyd, as well as the entire Minneapolis community, as they mourn the loss of a father, a son, a brother, a friend, and a neighbor. They are in our continued thoughts and prayers. With that said, the murder of Mr. Floyd is more than a tragedy. It is outrageous, it is appalling and it was avoidable. The actions, and inactions, that members of the Minneapolis Police Department took that day were excessive, unnecessary, and inexcusable. They erode the layers of trust and confidence that countless law enforcement agencies across the nation have worked to build in their communities. Mr. Floyd's death is the most recent act in a centuries' old series of injustices against people of color in this country. We must all do better and we stand with all Americans that are unspeakably angry and calling for change. The Town of Avon is a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming community built on the basis of equal treatment under the law, fundamental fairness and a respect for all individuals. The Avon Police Department works tirelessly every day to uphold those values, to contribute positively to our community, and to continue to be worthy of our respect. Despite this, we must recognize that we can always work harder to correct social injustice in our society. Our efforts can and should begin right here at home by listening more than speaking, continuing to educate ourselves and our children about the current and historical injustices in our country, engaging in peaceful protest, speaking out on social media, engaging in constructive dialogue with family, friends, and neighbors. I encourage us all to support each other as we strive to do better for our community and our country."

III. PUBLIC HEARING:

19/20-54 Neighborhood Assistance Act

The Public Hearing was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairperson Maguire. Chairperson Maguire waived the reading of the following legal notice:

"LEGAL NOTICE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Town Council of the Town of Avon, Connecticut will hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, June 4, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Hall, Selectmen's Chamber, 60 West Main Street, for the following purpose:

To consider participation in the Neighborhood Assistance

Act in accordance with Public Act 95-268.

Dated at Avon, Connecticut this 8th day of May, 2020.

Brandon L. Robertson

Town Manager"

Chairperson Maguire reported that the Nutmeg Symphony Orchestra come to us year after year and do a lot of work with the elementary schools; they also perform in the Farmington Valley and surrounding communities.

Jim Rio, Director of Police Services, reported that their proposals are for electronic signaling at one of our greenway crossings for bicycles and pedestrians and better signaling our school zone at the Avon Middle School and Avon High School on West Avon Road in both directions to slow down the traffic while school is in session.

Alan Rosenberg, Director of Social Services, reported that their proposal is in light of the current pandemic, to be able to position the Food Bank to offer more things to struggling families, and it would supplement what the Food Bank already offers.

Grace Tiezzi, Assistant to the Town Manager, reported that she assisted Terri Wilson with the Avon Historical Society (AHS) with their proposal and is a continuation of a proposal submitted last year for energy efficiency improvements for the Schoolhouse No. 3. She noted that there is \$30,000 in FY 20 capital budget for this project and the AHS has raised about \$40,000; the first phase of construction should start this summer.

Mike Galliher, President, Avon Volunteer Fire Department, reported that their proposal is for Company #2 on Secret Lake Road to replace the roof as well as windows for energy conservation.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council close the public hearing.

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

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council approve the following programs for submittal to the Department of Revenue Services:

- a) Nutmeg Symphony Orchestra - \$65,310.00
- b) Avon Police Department (Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety) - \$6,900.00
- c) Avon Police Department (School Zone Safety) - \$10,614.00
- d) Avon Department of Social Services - \$10,000.00
- e) Avon Volunteer Fire Department - \$60,000.00
- f) Avon Historical Society, Inc. - \$58,000.00

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

IV. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS: April 21, 2020 Special Meeting
April 29, 2020 Meeting

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the minutes of the April 21, 2020 Special Meeting as submitted.

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

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the minutes of the April 29, 2020 Meeting as submitted.

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

V. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE - None

VI. COMMUNICATION FROM COUNCIL

Mr. Weber shared that the past number of days have weighed heavily on his heart. He thanked his fellow Council members for listening to some ideas. We as a Town and a Town Council need to listen to members of our community who have been marginalized for a long time; for hundreds of years we have gone along and thought we were making progress; we want to be better listeners and what can we do to advance the cause of those who are underrepresented and underserved in our communities. He would like to see Town Council come to an agreement on providing a forum to listen to those who would seek to promote equity, to advance diversity, foster inclusiveness and support non-discrimination practices and anti-racist education; it is something where we could do a lot better as a Town; this Town has come a long way and it is a great Town to live in but that is not for him to say whether or not we are doing okay or not; we need to sit down and listen; with the collective knowledge and empathy that we have in our Town along with some of our departments along with reaching out to community leaders and reach out to other communities that we can develop a partnership to work towards a more equitable society in the Farmington Valley and maybe beyond. We need to think about what this will look like and open to ideas; we can be on the right side of history in this moment of time. Chairperson Maguire applauded the idea and fully support it; a lot of things that we do, the way we hire, etc. is already following those practices, but looking at roundtable type discussions and pulling groups together and learning, listening, and educating is the way to become a stronger community. She noted that at the protest today there was a lot of passion there; this discussion is a good starting point. The Town Manager commented that so much of this is embedded in our policies and practices, i.e. personnel rules and service contracts; an important principle in all of it is fair treatment and equal protection under the law. Alan Rosenberg, Director of Social Services, commented that it is important for us as a community to listen to these concerns, be supportive in any way we can, and play an active role and help whenever possible; through collaborative efforts with the Town of Farmington we are planning to offer speakers and seminars regarding racial issues, Black Lives Matter, with the theme of how our residents can be supportive and proactive and what could be the next possible steps. Chairperson Maguire inquired if the Youth Services Board would get involved with educating in the schools. Mr. Rosenberg responded that is part of the package; initially it would involve the Library, but with COVID-19 concerns it will be difficult to put together a forum so it would involve speakers and seminars that can be streamed. Mr. Weber noted it would be an awesome step. He

added that we want to allow the Superintendent of Schools and Director of Police Services time to review their policies and practices in place that promote inclusive and de-escalation policies and the partnership between our public safety officers in our schools. Mr. Weber requested an update at their July meeting on what the schools are doing or planning to do and what programs or training the police are going through. He added that words, deeds and laws have been in place for a long time and that hasn't gotten us anywhere and it's not that we're not that but more needs to be done. He would appreciate knowing that we are on the right side of this and we are working towards pressing this forward. Chairperson Maguire stated that Mr. Weber has a great vision and something we should absolutely be doing; if we need to meet sooner than the end of July we can. Mr. Weber noted that there is a strong silent population here in our Town that deserve to be listened to; it is our charge to listen to them because we all represent all of Avon and he knows we all take that very seriously. His intentions are true and come from a love of Avon in the right place. Chairperson Maguire thanked him for and appreciate his thoughts.

Mr. Speich thanked Chairperson Maguire for her remarks. He thanked Jim Rio, Director of Police Services, for the note put out to the officers and posted on their Facebook page, a complete transparency as to what you say to your officers which is a wonderful piece of work. He noted that his family is a public service family and knows how important it is. He added that Mr. Weber has great ideas and we should be involved; a Valley wide type organization is probably a pretty good idea and would bring in more resources and ideas; and would like an idea of the Avon experience and what the goals and direction for this commission would be; he wants to do what is best for the Town of Avon and its residents; he is fully supportive; make sure it has a direction, a focus, and a vision. Chairperson Maguire commented that any time we setup a commission they are given a charge which would come from several conversations to be had. The Town Manager suggested that Mr. Rosenberg continue talking to Farmington and perhaps reach out to other Social Services Directors in the Valley and for your next meeting we can come back with some suggestions. Chairperson Maguire noted that if you have information sooner we can hold a virtual special meeting.

Mr. Polhamus commented that he attended the rally which had a great turnout; it is going to uncomfortable for a lot of people but it is time. He added that after watching the George Floyd video he reached out to Mr. Rio to inquire about our policy and the action of those officers would have been a direct violation of many of our policies; there are suggestions floating around about additional policies and would expect us to be considering those and to be updated on that as time goes on; we are all big believers in our police force as allies and extremely hard to imagine what happened in Minnesota could happen here; use of force is inevitable but the level used in this case was completely unwarranted; there is a problem and that accountability comes back to us as a society and have to hold everybody accountable for this biases; he will help out however he can and looks forward to make progress. He noted the use of body cameras, but the studies go both ways. In response to a question from Mr. Polhamus, Mr. Rio responded that nobody in our area has body cameras but several have cruiser cameras; State funding had not been renewed, but legislation going forward propose reinfusing some of that money and we will track that. He noted that our officers are willing to wear the body cameras. He added that the cruiser cameras can be configured different ways, such as activated when emergency lights are put on; we would have to review/analyze configuration. He added that the State grants will cover the initial outlay but not the recurring costs. Mr. Polhamus congratulated high school seniors; they had an incredible parade and thanked Chairperson Maguire for her work with that. He noted that with COVID-19 it is

starting to seem a little more normal out there; he read a report about West Hartford restaurants sales plummeting and asked to please support our local restaurants until they can open for indoor dining on June 20th. He noted that the State has requested towns to form a Long-Term Economic Recovery Committee; Southington and West Hartford have already done such and we should think about it and discuss at our July meeting. He noted that West Hartford has two areas that focus on the economic recovery of the businesses and long-term recovery for the residents. He complimented the Avon Volunteer Fire Department and Police Department for putting on the birthday parades; it is appreciated and a great thing that they are doing.

Chairperson Maguire expressed thanks to the Avon Volunteer Fire Department with the birthday parades and sounding the horns on Friday nights when we salute our superheroes. She noted that we survived the budget process; it was not pretty but go through with something historic, a zero percent increase, and expressed thanks to everybody that made that happen as it will benefit the citizens of Avon; we have a lot to look towards; we have to watch expenses; the schools have a big unknown for the Fall; accolades and thanks for getting the job done. She noted a book titled, “Understanding Government Budgets” includes a whole chapter on Avon, “Small Town America” and referenced a section on public safety related to this evening’s discussion. She recognized Jamie DiPace who recently retired from his full-time position; he will be staying on part-time for the next several months; congratulations to him. She noted that Denise Dwyer, Personnel Administrator, will be retiring at the end of the month and has been wonderful here; we have not had an HR Director for a few years and she has done a great job keeping that all together with the Town Manager. She commented that she has been attending the Bike CT meetings and they are working on making Avon a bicycle safe community. She thanked everyone involved with the Avon High School seniors’ parade; it meant so much to them and she hopes it’s something we can continue to do; congratulations to the Class of 2020!

VII. OLD BUSINESS

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

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council table agenda item 19/20-37 Appointment: Building Code Board of Appeals (D – 12/31/2023) to the July 30, 2020 meeting.

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

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council move item 19/20-58 Supplemental Appropriation: Board of Education-Open Choice, \$206,528 up before item 19/40-45 COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

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

19/20-45 COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

The Town Manager noted that things do feel like they are normalizing a little bit; the Avon High School track is now open; 99% of the staff was brought back into the office on May 26th and seems to be working well; doors are still locked; most of business is being conducted remotely or on an appointment basis; it may be July or August before we unlock the doors; Town offices are being

outfitted with safety guards/improvements before doors are open to the public; the Library is operating curbside service; with Recreation, the pool will open on June 20th and a camp will run for the younger children at the Avon Senior Center; the Long-Term Recovery Committee has been a topic of conversation and part of the Governor's soft recommendation to consider utilizing it and we are working collaboratively on the topic. He added that we will be applying for reimbursement for any unanticipated COVID-19 expenses. He noted that the credit rating agencies were very interested in the impact by COVID-19. He added that everyone is itching to open the doors, getting back to a normal model and serving the public face to face. Chairperson Maguire noted that the Town has a great job, especially social services; we have a good plan for re-opening; thank you and all of the staff for getting through it.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

19/20-58 Supplemental Appropriation: Board of Education-Open Choice, \$206,528

Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs, reported that this is a recurring theme; Avon Public Schools participates in the Open Choice Program; they budget low for the enrollment with this revenue and anything over and above has to go through a supplemental appropriation process and funds to be given back to the Board of Education with specific uses directly impacting all students. She added that they also received Early Beginnings Pre-K/K funds which were not budgeted for.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council hereby recommends that the Board of Finance amend the FY 19/20 Budget by increasing:

REVENUES

General Fund, Intergovernmental, Education Program Grants, Account #01-0330-43343 in the amount of \$206,528.00 and increasing

APPROPRIATIONS

General Fund, Board of Education, BOE Expenses, Account #01-9401-55000 in the amount of \$206,528.00 for the purpose of funding school programs and special education needs.

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

19/20-59 Review, Discussion, Set Public Hearing: Drainage Easement: 35 Vermillion Drive

In response to a question from Mr. Speich, the Town Manager responded that the easement was not supposed to be there and is no longer necessary.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council set a public hearing to be held at their July 30, 2020 meeting to consider the release of a drainage easement located on the westerly side of Vermillion Drive at the northeast corner of Lot #8, known as Drainage Easement E, and described as follows: beginning at an Avon highway monument marking the northeast corner of Lot #8; thence running N 10 10' 58" E, along said westerly highway line forty-eight and twenty hundredths (48.20) feet to a point; thence running N 67 41' W seventy-eight and fifty-four hundredths (78.54) feet to the northerly boundary of Lot #8; thence running N74 38' 17" E, along said northerly boundary, sixty-

six and fifty-one hundredths (66.51) feet to the point of beginning. Together, with the unrestricted right to discharge drainage waters from said easement on to Lot #8.

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

19/20-60 Review, Discussion & Approval: Agreement: AMR Ambulance Services

Jim Rio, Director of Police Services, clarified that the agreement is for one-year with an option to renew for one additional year. He is recommending that we extend it for a two-year term with an option to renew for two years as we have been in a long enough relationship with them. In response to a question from Mr. Weber, Mr. Rio responded that AMR is the only game in Town; UConn does not run a general ambulance service; this is a no-cost contract to the Town; they charge the patients; we provide them with a facility and use of the Town's gas pumps with quarterly reimbursement to us. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, Mr. Rio responded that there is always an ambulance in Avon. Mr. Speich requested the addition of the 90% benchmark line on the monthly chart. Mr. Rio noted that we receive very minimal complaints with AMR.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council authorizes the Town Manager to execute the agreement with American Medical Response of Connecticut, Inc. (AMR) for ambulance services for two-years from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022 with the option to renew for one additional two-year period.

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

19/20-61 Agreement: Municipal Animal Control Officer

Chairperson Maguire noted that Canton pays 35.82% towards the cost-sharing agreement.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council approve the Animal Control Services Cost Sharing Agreement by and between the Towns of Canton and Avon, Connecticut through June 30, 2021.

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

19/20-62 Sign Tax Warrant (Rate Bill)

Chairperson Maguire reported that Council needs to sign the Tax Warrant/Rate Bill; the mill rate has already been set by the Board of Finance. Council members will need to stop by Town Hall to sign the Tax Warrant/Rate Bill.

IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/MISCELLANEOUS

Misc. A: Purchasing Update: The Town Manager highlighted that we continue to work on the acquisition of the Rescue truck; delivery will take place around July 1st.

Misc. B: Construction Update: The Town Manager noted that with the Public Safety Communications System Project it may be worthy of an agenda item in the near future; a site is still being determined; and he recognized Tom Kline, Jim Rio, and John Zematis for their continued hard work on this. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, the Town Manager

responded that there is no coverage by Roaring Brook School; the installation of a bi-directional antenna would boost the signal there. In response to a question from Mr. Weber, the Town Manager responded that our coverage would be worse with the existing State police infrastructure; we need the towers; the State could serve as our back office solution, or the core, and would identify any problems and access the system remotely. Mr. Rio added that we are engaging with the State; there is some cost savings in addition to the 24/7 monitoring and gives us more functionality; Bloomfield has gone on that system, Simsbury and West Hartford are considering it. The Town Manager noted that with the Library HVAC System, the Library Board has money left from the fundraising completed in 2010/2011 and have independently elected to spend some of it on HVAC improvements designed to get them through the summer, approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000; we will help implement that project. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, Mr. Rio responded that work in the Emergency Operations Center picked up and then COVID-19 hit so we lost a month; work has restarted and good progress has been made; estimated completion is end of July/early August.

Misc. C: Rating Agency Reports: The Town Manager reported that we went to the market on Tuesday this week; we were issuing \$3.25 million in debt for the AHS Synthetic Turf Field and Track Improvement Project and approximately \$270,000 for the Town and Public Safety Communications System Replacement Project and had six bidders and ended up with a rate of 1.25%. He noted that our AAA was reaffirmed by Moody's and Standard and Poor's. In response to a question from Mr. Polhamus, the Town Manager responded that to bond the Library HVAC Replacement System Project would require a referendum; it is an option however the project timeline would need to be extended and the heating season would become an issue.

Misc. D: Old Farms Road: The Town Manager reported that Avon Old Farms School has committed to paying for the cost of the project related to the relocation; an appropriation will be requested for that funding to spend it for that purpose.

Misc. E: Staff Updates: The Town Manager reported that Peggy Colligan, Director of Finance, is retiring; applications for this position are due on June 10th. He also noted that a new Director of Human Resources, Stephanie Askeland, is tentatively scheduled to start on July 6th.

XI. ADJOURN

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council adjourn the meeting at 9:22 p.m.

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

Attest: Jennifer Worsman, Clerk