

**AVON TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
October 1, 2020**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 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.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

20/21-07 Fire Fighter Tax Abatement

The Public Hearing was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Maguire. Chairperson Maguire waived the reading of the following legal notice:

“TOWN OF AVON
LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Town Council of the Town of Avon, Connecticut will hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at the Avon Town Hall, Selectman’s Chamber, 60 West Main Street, Avon, CT, or virtually, to consider the following:

To consider and permit all interested persons to speak on the plan of the Town Council to amend and restate Town Ordinance Chapter 55, “Taxation.” The recommended changes will be to Section 55-34.

A copy of the proposed amendments is on file on the Avon Town Clerk’s Office and open to the public for inspection during normal business hours.

Dated at Avon, Connecticut this 4th day of September, 2020.

Brandon L. Robertson, Town Manager”

Jamie DiPace, 55 Wheeler Road, member of the Avon Volunteer Fire Department and Town Council Representative, emphasized the importance of this tax abatement. He inquired about the consideration of the lifetime benefit. The Town Manager responded that it was suggested to Council that they amend the ordinance in two steps; tonight’s action being the first step, effective with the 2020 Grand List and the second step would include consideration of the lifetime benefit with twenty or more years of service effective with the 2021 Grand List. Mr. DiPace appreciates Council’s consideration and it is great for the volunteers. Chairperson Maguire expressed appreciation for what the volunteers do.

Mike Galliher, Board President, Avon Volunteer Fire Department, thanked Council for considering this proposal. He shared that these changes are important for recruitment and retention; the abatement is not indexed for inflation so this helps to keep up with the value of a dollar. He added that they are interested in matching up with the provisions of Connecticut General Statute 12-81w which allows for retired volunteer firefighters and fire police officers that serve

twenty-five years to continue to receive their tax abatement after they retire; there is a lot of interest in the Department and worth considering. He expressed thanks. Chairperson Maguire responded that Council will look into the retirement benefit.

Mr. Speich and Mr. Bernetich recused themselves from discussion regarding this item as they are members of the Avon Volunteer Fire Department.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council close the public hearing.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Polhamus and Weber voted in favor. Messrs: Speich and Bernetich recused themselves due to a conflict of interest. Motion was approved on a 3-0-2 vote.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council approve the recommended changes to Section 55-34 and amend and restate Town Ordinance Chapter 55, "Taxation," which will increase the tax exemption from \$1,000 to \$1,500, effective with the 2020 Grand List.

Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Polhamus and Weber voted in favor. Messrs: Speich and Bernetich recused themselves due to a conflict of interest. Motion was approved on a 3-0-2 vote.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council amend the Regulations for Tax Relief for Volunteer Firefighters, pursuant to Section 55-34 of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Avon, "Volunteer Firefighter Tax Relief" and shall be applicable to assessment years commencing October 1, 2020. Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Polhamus and Weber voted in favor. Messrs: Speich and Bernetich recused themselves due to a conflict of interest. Motion was approved on a 3-0-2 vote.

IV. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS: September 3, 2020 Meeting

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the minutes of the September 3, 2020 Meeting as drafted.

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

V. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE - None

VI. COMMUNICATION FROM COUNCIL

Mr. Polhamus expressed thanks for sharing voter information on the Town's web site. He commented on the animosity and polarization with the political scene being disheartening and sad. He reflected on his year as a Council member with appreciation to all and working together for what we believe is the best for Avon; we are concerned about the common good of Avon, the safety and prosperity of our residents and employees, none of us are in this for wealth, greed, power or fame; he enjoys living in Avon and wants to ensure the same can be said for every resident and employee here regardless of gender, skin color, and the uniform they wear; even if we have to break from precedent and pushing our boundaries, small gestures which can make an enormous difference. He appreciates what everyone brings to the community; let's make it great for everyone. He commented that the Lower Farmington River & Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic

Committee will have small grants available this month with ability and will to pursue additional funding, to put aside for improvements that enable recreational opportunities or provide information about the Farmington River. He proposed improvements at Alsop Meadows, perhaps with picnic tables and/or floating dock, to better appreciate the Farmington River as a recreational resource. He commented on a proposed trail from New Road to the Farmington River mentioned in the Plan of Conservation and Development. He applauded the Assistant Town Manager with her work on the Sustainable CT submission. He proposed that the Avon Clean Energy Commission be re-charged, more in-line with sustainability.

Mr. Weber echoed several of Mr. Polhamus' comments. He has enjoyed working with everyone on the Council and appreciate that we leave it at the door and come together for the betterment of Avon. He noted that it lifted his spirits to see high school athletes on the turf field and attempting to return to some form of normalcy with sports activities; elementary schools returning to full in-person learning; his thoughts go out to the teachers/administrators, being a teacher himself, as they embark on an unprecedented shift in the practice of their profession; best wishes to all, that they may have the ability to let their talent shine regardless of how this year ends up; thank you to the Board of Education and he appreciates working with them.

Mr. Speich noted the passing of Steve Kushner, former Director of Planning and Community Development with the Town; he was a great asset, always kept Avon first; the latest revisions to the Plan of Conservation and Development came from his hard work; keep his family in our thoughts. He reported that he has had several meetings with the Avon Volunteer Fire Department discussing long-term planning and soliciting ideas with recruitment, retention, apparatus, and facilities; a summary will be prepared to discuss and present to Council in the coming months.

Chairperson Maguire participated in the drive-thru flu clinic hosted by the Farmington Valley Health District and the Farmington Valley VNA. She also noted Steve Kushner's passing and shared that he worked for the Town for 26 years, a period when our Town went through tremendous growth and had his fingerprint all over the Town of Avon; he retired in 2016 and stayed on as a Special Project Manager updating the Plan of Conservation and Development which is truly a work of art; he was a kind, gentle, thoughtful, and extremely knowledgeable gentlemen; we keep his wife Helaine and sons Jason and Zachary, his mother and all of his family in our thoughts and prayers; the Town of Avon thanks him for the tremendous work he has done to move us ahead, please rest in peace Steve. She noted that there is a Town Council Policy that allows us the opportunity to make a memorial donation in his memory. Council gave consensus to make a memorial donation in Steve Kushner's memory. The Town Manager noted that Steve Kushner had a calming presence and was able to gain significant benefits from proposed project developers who otherwise might not have been as amendable; in Steve's memory, park at Fisher Meadows and take a look at Spring Pond and walk over to the pump house and remember that when first proposed it was going to be industrial housing. Mr. Speich inquired if a plaque could be installed on the bench in Steve's memory. The Town Manager responded that he would look into that.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

20/21-03 Education/Awareness: Diversity/Implicit Bias

Glenn Grube, Library Director, reported that the Library held a three-part program with Kamora Herrington from Kamora's Cultural Corner in Hartford called, "Anti-Racism: Not Your Mother's Diversity Workshop." He noted that Ms. Herrington recapped the workshop with Library staff; the good news is that she did not see any problem issues but recognize that the folks who attended self-selected to go to this program; suggestions for future steps include additional workshops or the recommendation is to hold a panel discussion with Avon residents who could assist with the implementation of such communication during a community conversation on race; the goal is to get a baseline, bring out the perceived issues/problems, and start working towards solutions. Mr. Weber thanked Mr. Grube for his work on this; it's not an easy topic, but appreciates his openness and willingness as we're all better off for it. Chairperson Maguire expressed thanks and it will be a beneficial panel discussion. Mr. Grube commented that he would like to begin around the third week of October. He noted that a group called Health Equity Solutions sent a letter to Council suggesting the adoption of a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis in Avon and that was a topic that the panel wants to address. Mr. Polhamus expressed thanks and recommended a documented summary/feedback from the panel, referencing the Simsbury Spirit Council. Mr. Grube also referred to "Government Action for Racial Equity" as a reference tool.

20/21-22 Appointment: Committee on Aging (R – 12/31/2021)

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council table agenda item 20/21-22 Appointment: Committee on Aging (R – 12/31/2021) to the November 5, 2020 meeting.

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

20/21-23 Appointment: Youth Services Advisory Board (12/31/2021)

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council table agenda item 20/21-23 Appointment: Youth Services Advisory Board (12/31/2021) to the November 5, 2020 meeting.

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

20/21-24 Appointment: Central Regional Tourism District (12/31/2021)

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council table agenda item 20/21-24 Appointment: Central Regional Tourism District (12/31/2021) to the November 5, 2020 meeting.

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

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

20/21-25 Supplemental Appropriation: Bailey Road Subdivision Paving

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council hereby recommends that the Board of Finance amend the FY 20/21 Budget by increasing:

REVENUES

Capital Projects Fund (Facil & Equip), Other Local Revenue, Payment in Lieu of Road Improvements, Account #02-0360-43659, in the amount of \$20,000.00 and increasing:

APPROPRIATIONS

Capital Projects Fund (Facil & Equip), Town CIP- Facil/Road Overlay, Road Overlay, Account #02-4831-53003, in the amount of \$20,000.00, for the purpose of paving Bailey Road Subdivision, per an agreement with Sunlight Construction, Inc. and the Town of Avon.

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

20/21-26 Acceptance of Gift: Avon Senior Center Dedication Painting

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the gift of a Fisher Meadows painting originally dedicated to the Avon Senior Center Building Committee and now donated by the former Committee Chairman Tom Francoline.

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

The Town Manager noted that Mr. Francoline has a long history in Avon and was involved with several land developments in the Farmington Valley. Mr. Speich added that Mr. Francoline was the developer of Avon Ridge and a great person and giver to the Town of Avon. The Town Manager shared that the artist is the late Janice Loeffler, an Avon resident and Chairperson for Avon's National Bicentennial celebration in 1976.

20/21-27 FY 21/22 Budget: Approve Capital Budget Review Schedule

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council approve the following FY 21/22 Capital Improvement Program Budget Review Schedule as provided:

Thursday, November 5th	Regular Town Council Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
	7:00 p.m. Engineering
	7:30 p.m. Public Works
	8:00 p.m. Recreation and Parks
Thursday, December 3rd	Regular Town Council Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
	7:00 p.m. Board of Education
	7:30 p.m. Police Department
	8:00 p.m. Fire Department
	8:30 p.m. General Government

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

20/21-28 Approve 2021 Meeting Schedule

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council adopt the following schedule of meetings in accordance with P.A. 723 of the 1967 Session of the Connecticut General Assembly, the following is a schedule of meetings for the Year 2021 and January of 2022.

Thursday, January 7, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, February 4, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, March 4, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall

Thursday, April 1, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, May 6, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, June 3, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, July 29, 2021*	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, September 2, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, October 7, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, November 4, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, December 2, 2021	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall
Thursday, January 6, 2022	7:00 p.m. – Town Hall

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

20/21-29 Appointment: Avon Clean Energy Commission (R – 12/31/2021)

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council table agenda item 20/21-29 Appointment: Avon Clean Energy Commission (R-12/31/2021) to the November 5, 2020 meeting.

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

IX. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT/MISCELLANEOUS

Misc. A: Purchasing Update: The Town Manager noted that the Avon Volunteer Fire Department’s new rescue truck should be arriving any day now and an RFQ is currently out for an Affordable Housing Study.

Misc. B: Construction Update: The Town Manager noted that we are wrapping up the paving season; we are getting closer to final design for the Library geothermal system; we continue with our two sections of Old Farms Road with good results from the archeologists on the north/south section; we have LOTCIP funding approved through CRCOG for the east/west section. He noted a new Town directory sign that was installed on Town Hall campus; a good staff group worked together on a nice improvement.

Misc. C: Bicycle Friendly Community Application: The Town Manager noted that the Assistant Town Manager is doing a lot of work with the Bike Walk Avon CT; discussions regarding potential options to improve various trail crossings at Arch Road, Scoville Road, and Thompson Road; we have funding available through a CTDOT Connectivity Grant to install signalized crossings at those various trail locations; fencing and beautification needs are also being discussed; an application will be submitted by February 2021. In response to a question from Mr. Weber, the Town Manager responded that the Town is responsible for trail resurfacing funds with no current funding, but root intrusion repairs will need to be done soon. Chairperson Maguire thanked the Town Manager, Director of Public Works, and Fran Gurtman for meeting on the trails to discuss areas for improvement; the Bike Walk Avon CT is motivated and interested in adding Avon as a designation.

Misc. D: Old Farms Road Bridge: The Town Manager noted that a capstone presentation will be made by the Town Engineer at Council’s next meeting.

The Town Manager reported that approximately 4,000 absentee ballots will be going out to residents tomorrow; we hired around 10 absentee ballot clerks to help with the process which is going very well.

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Real Estate

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council enter into Executive Session at 8:14 p.m.
Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Speich, Polhamus, and Weber voted in favor.

The Town Manager, the Assistant Town Manager, and Clerk attended the session.

XI. ADJOURN

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m.
Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Speich, Polhamus, and Weber voted in favor.

Attest: Jennifer Worsman, Clerk