

**AVON TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
February 4, 2021**

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 HEARING: None

IV. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING: January 7, 2021
January 19, 2021 Special Meeting

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the minutes of the January 7, 2021 Meeting as drafted.

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

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the minutes of the January 19, 2021 Special Meeting as drafted.

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

V. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE

Haleigh Guerrero, Chairperson of the Avon Greater Together Community Fund Advisory Committee, shared about an exciting opportunity for Avon; the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (the "Foundation") created community funds for each town, 29 towns total; the Advisory Committee will solicit and review grant applications; this Committee has met monthly since August 2020. She noted that a listening tour was completed in 2018 and one common finding was that residents understand the challenges they face in their communities but they feel constrained by a lack of resources; this led the Foundation to create the Greater Together Community Funds. Each Community Fund receives \$100,000 over two years; \$50,000 of spendable money this year with about 5% of the other \$50,000 being earned in spendable money each subsequent year, or \$2,500 over twenty years. They have the responsibility of creating a grant application and getting it out to the community, reviewing all applications and then decide how to allocate the funds. They are currently gathering resident feedback; a survey is currently circulating and will close on February 12th; and this week she is facilitating a series of focus groups. She noted that applicants can be any non-profit registered as a 501 c 3 organization that serves the needs of Avon residents, but does not need to be headquartered in Avon, and in some cases to municipalities; individuals, private foundations and for-profit businesses are not eligible to apply.

Chairperson Maguire thanked Ms. Guerrero; she noted that their survey was sent out town wide. Ms. Guerrero responded that they have close to 250 responses; the plan is to compare the quantitative results from the survey with the qualitative results of the focus group and put a report together which will be made available to people. She added that their next Committee meeting is February 16th and will review everything, list the needs, and start to make an application to hopefully go out by March. Chairperson Maguire thanked Ms. Guerrero for attending and sharing.

VI. COMMUNICATION FROM COUNCIL

Mr. Polhamus expressed a note of appreciation to Public Works with the recent snow clearing. He noted that regarding the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Committee, information went out about the grant and perhaps using it towards making Alsop Meadows a more desirable location to improve recreational access.

Mr. Weber is looking forward to hearing how the work of the Avon Greater Together Community Fund Advisory Committee transforms Avon over so many years and expressed thanks to the Foundation. He echoed Mr. Polhamus' comments regarding Public Works. He extended thanks to Town staff with being proactive with their communication. He noted a Hartford Courant article on January 31st regarding toxic chemicals in firefighters' protective clothing and hopes that our firefighters take a look at the article; protecting our volunteers and keeping our residents safe should be a high priority.

Mr. Speich had been reading about the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and was glad to hear from Ms. Guerrero tonight. He thanked Public Works for their snow removal services. He appreciated the letter sent to legislators regarding vehicle thefts; it seems to be growing in strength and would like to hear from our legislators; the issue is on social media; he asked about adding this as a monthly report statistic. Chairperson Maguire noted that the uptick in vehicle thefts is a statewide problem; a resident is putting a virtual town meeting together, inviting our legislators, to understand our concerns and fears; public safety is important; we have to keep our citizens safe; a neighborhood watch has also been mentioned; and agreed that a report to Council as things happen would be helpful.

Mr. Bernetich echoed compliments about Public Works. He thanked the firefighters who were on standby during the snowstorm.

Chairperson Maguire echoed appreciation for the Avon Volunteer Fire Department, Avon Police Department, and Public Works. She stopped in to the vaccine clinic last Friday sponsored by the Farmington Valley Health District for our seniors 75 and older; it ran smoothly; we gave out about 200 first doses. She attended the recent Bike Walk meeting and are almost ready to send in the application for the safe bicycle community certification and appreciates the hard work by the group; there will be a bike ride on Wednesday May 5th at 5:00 p.m. to kick-off bike month.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council move item 20/21-02 Lights at AHS Synthetic Turf Field and Track up before item 15/16-36 Avon Village Center Project Update and Authorize Assignment of Development Agreement.

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

VII. OLD BUSINESS**15/16-36 Avon Village Center Project Update and Authorize Assignment of Development Agreement**

Hiram Peck, Director of Planning and Community Development, made a presentation (which is attached and made part of these minutes). He noted that the bike path behind the Town Hall complex shall re-open on March 15th. He added that Whole Foods is scheduled to be turned over to them by May 7th with an anticipated opening by the end of May.

In response to a question from Chairperson Maguire, Mr. Peck responded that discussions are taking place regarding potential lease tenants; one tenant will be some kind of physical therapist facility. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, Mr. Peck responded that residential units will be located in two buildings on the other side of Climax Road as well as on the north side of Market Street with apartments on the second floor of those buildings. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, Mr. Peck responded that the concrete wall near Forest Mews will probably end up being owned by the Town and recommend that the developer maintain it. The Town Manager noted that the Whole Foods parking lot will have six charging stations. In response to a question from Mr. Weber, Mr. Peck responded that the R3 building site was originally proposed to be an upscale restaurant but Whole Foods did not want competition; the developer agreed it could be a smaller bank or investment firm with high quality construction. In response to a question from Mr. Weber, Mr. Peck responded that the totality of Phase 1A depends on the balance of commercial and residential construction as well as the market; the next year or two will be important with the State's economy, etc. In response to a question from Mr. Weber, Mr. Peck responded that street names throughout the Village Center are still being worked out; Ensign Drive will remain such.

The Town Manager recognized Mr. Peck for his hard work and focus on quality with this Project. He introduced Murtha Cullina Attorney Kari Olsen who highlighted the request before Town Council to authorize the Town Manager to sign two Assignment Agreements; the developer appears to shift properties not in Phase 1A to different LLCs. She noted that if the LLCs that hold the property fail, then Mechanics Bank can finish the Project to preserve their interest; they cannot sell off parcels or the development without Town Council approval. She added that these agreements are very common as they shield companies from liability in a financing context.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council authorizes the Town Manager to execute an Assignment and Assumption of the Development Agreement and an Assignment Agreement of Development to Mechanics Bank for Phase 1A on behalf of the Town, both related to the Avon Village Center Project.

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

20/21-02 Lights at AHS Synthetic Turf Field and Track
a. Acceptance of Gift from ACORN, \$145,048

Chairperson Maguire noted that two years ago we sat in the Avon Room and learned about ACORN's plan to bring lights to the high school and through a pandemic they were able to do a lot of fundraising and we are excited to accept the check. Susan Rietano-Davey, ACORN Board

President, recognized fellow Board members Vice President Ben Coleman, Secretary Louisa Hogan, Treasurer Jim Stapleton, Lauren Magel, Matt Woods, Michelle Hards, Joe Pavano, and David Magrini. She noted that it didn't exactly go the way they wanted but fortunately the Town had an opportunity to get us over the finish line and they are thrilled. Chairperson Maguire responded that ACORN did a great job; it is a great project. Ms. Rietano-Davey reported that their fundraising efforts resulted in over three hundred donations. Chairperson Maguire noted that the opportunity of the bond sale premium to come through and give us an opportunity to apply money to this project which we have always wanted to be part of, in addition to paying off some debt service so it is a win-win for the community.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the gift of \$145,048 from ACORN, in accordance with Section 4.3.2(l) of the Town Charter, to be used towards the lights at the Avon High School Synthetic Turf Field.

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

Council expressed much thanks to the ACORN Board for their hard work on this project.

b. Supplemental Appropriation, \$145,048

On a motion made by Mr. Speich, seconded by Mr. Polhamus, 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 Revenues, Lights For AHS Field, Account #02-0360-49122 in the amount of \$145,048.00 and increasing

APPROPRIATIONS

Capital Projects Fund (Facil & Equip), Town CIP-Facilities, Synthetic Field Project, Account #02-4829-53052, in the amount of \$145,048.00, for the purpose of recording a donation for project costs.

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

c. Appropriation from Capital Projects Fund Balance, \$235,000

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council favorably recommends to the Board of Finance an appropriation not to exceed \$235,000.00 from Capital Projects Fund (Facil & Equip), Other Financing Sources, Unassigned Fund Balance, Account #02-0390-43913, to Capital Projects Fund (Facil & Equip), Town CIP-Facilities, Synthetic Field Project, Account #02-4829-53052 for the purpose of using bond premium received in the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020 to install lights at the AHS synthetic field and track.

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

20/21-24 Appointment: Central Regional Tourism District (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 20/21-24 Appointment: Central Regional Tourism District (12/31/2021) to the March 4, 2021 meeting.

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

20/21-27 FY 21/22 Budget Development

Chairperson Maguire reminded everyone about their Budget Work Session scheduled for Saturday, February 6th starting at 8:00 a.m. which will be held virtually.

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

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council appoint Melissa Firestone to the Avon Clean Energy Commission to fill a vacancy with a term to expire on December 31, 2021.

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

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

20/21-49 Contract Recommendation: Grounds Maintenance Services

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council award contracts to T&T Complete Landscaping, LLC of Newington, CT and BCI, Inc. dba Butler Company of Windsor, CT, for a three-year period beginning in January 2021 and ending on December 31, 2023, in amounts not to exceed \$101,658 (\$33,886 per year) and \$136,005 (\$45,335 per year) respectively, for grounds maintenance services.

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

20/21-50 Appropriation from Unassigned Fund Balance: AHS Roof Top Unit Project, \$796,396

Myles Altimus, Director of Operations, reported that this appropriation replaces fourteen roof top units that were installed in 1998; their life cycle ended in 2013; the project will include an upgrade to the automation system; this takes care of about two-thirds of what the district has been requesting to replace; Trane plans to start the day after school is out and complete it by July 18th.

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council favorably recommends to the Board of Finance an appropriation not to exceed \$796,396.00 from General Fund, Other Financing Sources, Unassigned Fund Balance, Account #01-0390-43913 and transfer from General Fund, Other Financing Uses, Interfund Transfer Out, Account #01-8700-58000 to Capital Projects Fund (Facil & Equip), BOE CIP Facilities, AHS RTU Replace CIP, Account #02-4859-54601, and Capital Projects Fund (Facil & Equip), Other Financing Sources, Interfund Transfers In, Account #02-0390-43918 not to exceed \$796,396.00 for the purpose of replacing rooftop HVAC units at Avon High School.

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

20/21-51 Supplemental Appropriation: Avon Senior Center: State Unit on Aging Grant, \$2,500

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

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

REVENUES

Recreation Activities Fund, Other Local Revenues, Donations & Grants, Private Sources, Account #09-0360-43651 in the amount of \$2,500.00 and increasing:

APPROPRIATIONS

Recreation Activities Fund, Senior Citizens, Services-Other, Account #09-5301-52189 in the amount of \$2,500.00, for the purpose of funding our Outreach and Social Integration programs and activities. Avon Senior Center is submitting a grant to the SUA (State Unit on Aging) for older adult programming and initiatives to reach people at home, especially due to COVID.

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

The Town Manager applauded Jennifer Bennett, Senior Center Coordinator, for seeking these grant opportunities for the Senior Center.

20/21-52 Veteran's Property Tax Relief Program

Harry DerAsadourian, Tax Assessor, provided a brief overview regarding this program. He noted that we currently have a number of veterans' benefits and allowed by State statute; basic benefit of \$1,500, in addition to additional assessment adjustments, i.e. disabled. This topic deals with the basic benefit of \$1,000 was enacted over fifty years ago to recognize veteran service to the country during a time of war; about twenty-five years ago legislature told the towns to give 50% more, or a total of \$1,500. He noted that if a veteran is low income, as prescribed by the State's income schedule, the Town if it chooses can provide additional benefit up, to \$25,000 off their assessment. Avon provides an additional \$10,000 exemption if they fall within the income guidelines that we have adopted which are greater than the State and consistent with the elderly tax relief program that we have. He noted that the current income limit is \$57,500 for both programs. He added that we have 94 participants who qualify for the income based \$10,000 reduction; we have a total of 502 veterans receiving some kind of benefit. He noted that the request brought before him is to raise the benefit to \$20,000 and eliminate the income requirements; this would become pricey and becomes a burden on the other taxpayers as the \$330,000 that is not collected is still being spent so there is a shift. He noted that this program trickles down from the State statute. He noted that the best way to handle this and provide the benefit and recognition to the veteran at the same time maintaining integrity to both programs would be to look at this more as a legislative correction and ask them to increase it. He added that this basic benefit varies from community to community. He noted that in the fall we can look at the income limits and review both programs at that time.

Chairperson Maguire noted that we want to do everything to be sure that our veterans' needs are being met but to also be fair to all taxpayers in Avon. She asked for a comparison with other towns and perhaps reach out to our legislators. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, Mr. DerAsadourian responded that the Town absorbs the \$1,500. Mr. Speich noted that he would like to keep this program consistent with the elderly tax relief program. Mr. Bernetich noted that most

veterans he knows are proud to have served and how many of them are actively looking for additional funds at taxpayers' expenses. Chairperson Maguire thanked Mr. DerAsadourian for his explanation and time.

20/21-53 Approval of Motor Vehicle Tax Refunds, \$2,058.23

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council approve motor vehicle tax refunds to the following: EAN Holdings LLC in the amounts of \$1,008.06 and \$1,050.17.

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

20/21-54 Appointment: Assistant Town Attorney (CT Water Rate Case)

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council appoint Day Pitney as an Assistant Town Attorney.

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

20/21-55 Acceptance of Gifts

a. For the Avon Special Needs Fund, \$7,500

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the gift of \$7,500.00 from John and Capri Brighenti, in accordance with Section 4.3.2(l) of the Town Charter, which they request to be used for the Avon Special Needs Fund.

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

b. For the Avon Food Bank, \$7,400

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accept the following gifts, in accordance with Section 4.3.2(l) of the Town Charter, which have been requested to be used for the Avon Food Bank: from Bearingstar Insurance Charitable Fund in the amount of \$2,000.00, from Mr. & Mrs. David R. Beaulieu in the amount of \$5,000.00, and from employees of Avon Plumbing and Heating in the amount of \$400.00.

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

20/21-56 Supplemental Appropriation: Farmington Valley Health District, \$21,525

The Town Manager reported that the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD) is requesting financial assistance with the vaccine clinic process as a result of additional staff time required. He noted that FVHD member towns are in support. Chairperson Maguire noted that hosting vaccine clinics at the Avon Senior Center is a great thing for our citizens. She thanked the FVHD for their hard work, especially during this time.

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

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

REVENUES

General Fund, Intergovernmental, OPM FEMA-COVID Relief, Account #01-0330-43700 in the amount of \$21,525.00 and increasing

APPROPRIATIONS

General Fund, Regulation & Inspection, Service & Consultant, Account #01-4101-52184, in the amount of \$21,525.00, for the purpose of increasing funding to the Farmington Valley Health District.

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

IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/MISCELLANEOUS

Misc. A: Purchasing Update: The Assistant Town Manager noted that we are currently drafting a request for qualifications (RFQ) for services to develop a Facilities Master Plan for the Avon Volunteer Fire Department.

Misc. B: Construction Update: The Assistant Town Manager noted with regard to the Town and Public Safety Communications System Project we continue to work on pricing with Motorola; the Police Department patrol building improvements continue; the emergency generator at the Police Department has failed and will need to be replaced; the Library geothermal system work has begun; Schoolhouse No. 3 improvements are underway; and Recreation and Parks has completed the renovation to the pavilion at Sycamore Hills. Mr. Speich inquired about a timeline regarding the Town and Public Safety Communications System Project. The Town Manager responded that Motorola assigned a new team to us and a list of tasks has been developed; we are making good progress; the radios will be different for each entity which affects pricing; if the cost of the project not including the Huckleberry Hill site is at \$3.89 million or under we have a straight forward path; if over, we have to go back out for another authorization from the voters. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, the Assistant Town Manager responded that with regard to the Rails to Trails Improvements funding includes a request in FY 21/22 capital budget as well as a small appropriation from Fund 4 for fencing; signage was funded by Public Works and the beacons were grant funded.

X. ADJOURN

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

RESOLVED: That the Town Council adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

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

Attest: Jennifer Worsman, Clerk

Avon Village Center

Status Update



Avon Town Council
February 4, 2021

Avon Village Center
Tower under
construction.

Next to trail and public
rest area:

- Trail restoration
- Boulder Garden
Rest Stop

All in progress.





Avon Village Center Parcels

2/3/2021 9:42:40 AM

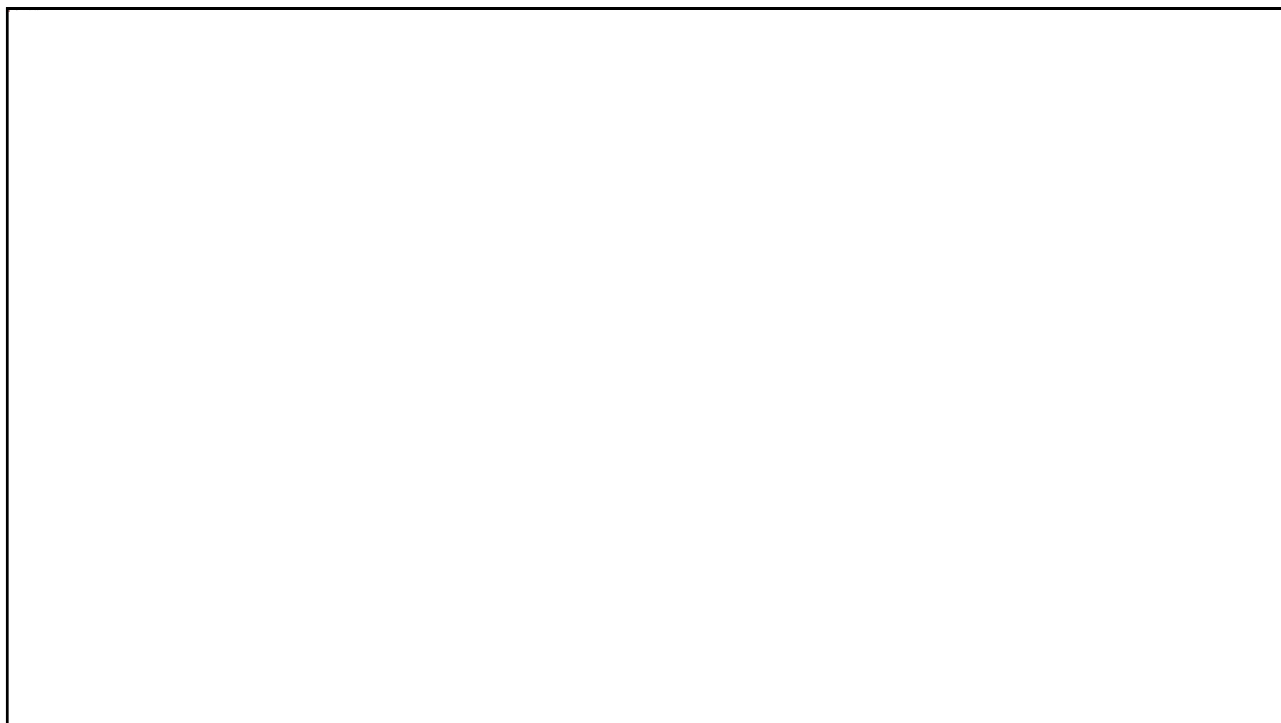
Scale: 1"=400'

Scale is approximate

The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only.
It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory
interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.







Questions?