

**AVON TOWN COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 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:** February 4, 2021  
February 6, 2021 Budget Work Session  
February 17, 2021 Budget Work Session

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council accept the minutes of the February 4, 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. Weber, it was voted:

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council accept the minutes of the February 6, 2021 Budget Work Session as drafted.

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

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council accept the minutes of the February 17, 2021 Budget Work Session as drafted.

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

**V. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE**

Jamie DiPace, Town Council Representative for the Avon Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD), reported that the AVFD has been working hard this last month, particularly during the last wind storm; they responded to three calls within a minute of each other; power lines were down and a few homes were hit by trees; the AVFD did a great job. Chairperson Maguire expressed thanks to the AVFD and their service is greatly appreciated.

**VI. COMMUNICATION FROM COUNCIL**

Mr. Speich shared that the Nepaug Reservoir is a great place for an outdoor walk. He also recently helped a friend tap his maple trees to collect sap which is an interesting process.

Mr. Polhamus expressed thanks to Jamie DiPace for his years of service with the Town and also thanks to the Avon Volunteer Fire Department during the last wind storm. He complimented the Avon Senior Center and Farmington Valley Health District for their hard work with the vaccination clinics.

Mr. Weber expressed thanks to Town staff during the ice and wind storms – a great job by all; a few residents have also written thank you letters. He noted that he will be participating in the Read Across America virtual event tomorrow. He commented that the housing market is very hot in this area and bodes well for us as a town.

Chairperson Maguire noted that she will also be participating in the Read Across America virtual event tomorrow, along with the all Council members. She shared a reminder about the Bike Walk Avon event on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

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**

### **20/21-24 Appointment: Central Regional Tourism District (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 20/21-24 Appointment: Central Regional Tourism District (12/31/2021) to the April 1, 2021 meeting.

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

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council move items 20/21-57 2021 Girl Scout Day Proclamation and 20/21-52 Veteran's Property Tax Relief Program up before item 20/21-27 FY 21/22 Budget Development.

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

### **20/21-27 FY 21/22 Budget Development**

Chairperson Maguire noted that the Council has held multiple meetings to discuss the FY 21/22 budget, we are making up for last year with the use of the Unassigned Fund Balance; the general fund Town operating budget would increase 3.14% over the current year budget, a mill rate increase of 4.56%; 3.47% of the increase is needed to support the new spending including the Board of Education and 2.12% of the increase makes up for the use of the \$1.8 million from Unassigned Fund Balance in the current year budget. The Town Manager noted that for FY 21/22 we are at an overall increase of 2.58%. He reviewed adjustments (which are attached and made part of these minutes) that were made since Council's second Budget Work Session a few weeks ago. Mr. Bernetich would like to see the Fire Inspector budget line item increased to \$10,000 versus \$5,000. The Town Manager noted that even though the Grand List grew over one percent

we still have the use of Unassigned Fund Balance of \$1.8 million that was appropriated last year that needs to be made up somehow. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, the Town Manager responded that the mill rate increase would be 4.56%. The Town Manager noted that it would be similar to what we saw in FY 18/19 and that was our last revaluation along with a drop in our Grand List; it is the same effect, making up for a dollar value that is not there. Mr. Weber noted that our mill rate is at 32.9 and would increase 1.5 mills, based on the FY 21/22 proposed budget. Chairperson Maguire commented that she does not want to short any fire inspector needs and inquired about any funds being available with the transitioning of the recently retired Fire Marshal full-time position. She noted that the budget reflects services that make Avon great, including education, public health, police, fire, roads, athletic fields, maintenance, social services, capital investment; this money goes a long way, there have been a lot of cuts and a lot of tough decisions were made. Mr. Weber noted that things cost money to upkeep a town much like a house, if you don't put in the investments in your own home things will break and you will pay more in the long run; you have to allocate funds in certain places in order to take care of your home; even though there may an increase, that is part of the cost of doing business in this town, living here and benefiting from its services but it is the reality and the situation we live in and this is a budget that he is comfortable with. Chairperson Maguire shared the upcoming budget meeting dates.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council recommends the FY 21/22 Proposed Budget of \$101,261,159 to the Board of Finance as follows:

#### **REVENUES**

Property Tax & Assessments	\$ 89,971,388
Intergovernmental	3,449,597
Licenses, Fees & Permits	1,031,650
Charges for Current Services	6,375,624
Other Local Revenues	372,900
Other Financing Sources (Uses)	60,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 101,261,159</b>

#### **EXPENDITURES**

Town Operating Budget	\$ 27,404,126
School Operating Budget	64,558,457
Sewer Operating Budget	3,099,766
Capital & Debt Service Budgets:	
Debt Service	2,975,117
Capital Budget (CNREF, Facilities & Equipment)	3,223,693
<i>Subtotal: Capital &amp; Debt Service</i>	<i>6,198,810</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 101,261,159</b>

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

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

Harry DerAsadourian, Tax Assessor, provided additional information regarding this program. He compared Avon to ten towns reviewing both the veteran's property tax relief program and elderly tax relief program, four of which have similar or identical limits; the highest being Granby at \$63,400, Avon is at \$57,500, Canton is at \$52,600 and Burlington is at \$50,000. He added that

the State limit for a married couple on the elderly tax relief program is \$45,800. He noted we have a healthy margin over the State limit. He noted that regarding the benefit they are all around the \$10,000 mark with the exception of Bloomfield and Windsor; Farmington is at \$5,000. He noted that Avon is in the upper 25<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher for the income limit and benefit. He recommended reviewing the program in the fall alongside the elderly tax relief program. He noted that to recognize the service that all veterans have done, it should be a legislative correction with an adjustment to the basic benefit and would maintain integrity for the income-based programs. In response to a question from Mr. Polhamus, Mr. DerAsadourian responded that the State income limits are adjusted every year based on the increase in social security; for Avon this program needs to be renewed every other year with a review of the income limits at that time; Avon has been at \$57,500 for a few years; and it increased approximately three years ago. Mr. Polhamus likes the idea of the 10% of assessment exemption versus the greater of \$10,000. Mr. DerAsadourian will review numbers to quantify the 10% of assessment scenario and the fiscal impact for better evaluation. Mr. DerAsadourian noted that there are ninety-four property owners in the program. Council gave consensus to review both the veteran's property tax relief program and elderly tax relief program in early fall in preparation for the FY 23 budget with the goal to keep the programs the same. Chairperson Maguire thanked Mr. DerAsadourian for the information and his time.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **20/21-57 2021 Girl Scout Day Proclamation**

Chairman Maguire welcomed Troop Leader Helaine Bertsch with Girl Scout Troop #60449. She reported that she recently attended a virtual Girl Scout meeting to discuss the Town and the budget process. Ms. Bertsch expressed thanks and noted that the girl scouts earned their democracy badge. Chairperson Maguire noted that the signed proclamation would be mailed to Ms. Bertsch to share with the girl scouts. Chairperson Maguire read the following proclamation.

#### **Girl Scout Day Proclamation**

A Proclamation on the Importance of the All-Girl Space Offered by Girl Scouts  
 WHEREAS, March 12, 2021 marks the 109th anniversary of Girl Scouts of the USA, the largest and most successful leadership program for girls in the world; and  
 WHEREAS, as the world's premier leadership development organization for girls, Girl Scouts has emphasized public service, civic engagement, and fostering a sense of community in girls for over a century; and  
 WHEREAS, Girl Scouts works to champion the ambitions, cultivate the talents, and develop the skills of girls to be leaders in their own world, and in ours; and  
 WHEREAS, in these incredibly challenging times, Girl Scouts provides community, consistency, and connection for girls, and is a safe haven in all the uncertainty; and  
 WHEREAS, in the time of COVID-19, Girl Scouts offers girls skill-building digital programming and experiences girls can participate in safely from home as they continue their Girl Scouts journeys; and  
 WHEREAS, at a time when civics education is missing from many schools, Girl Scouts has introduced new K-12 Civics badges to bring girls more experiences that deepen their understanding of democracy and government, prepare them for a lifetime of civic engagement, and motivate them to be catalysts for change; and

WHEREAS, Girl Scouts offers girls 21<sup>st</sup> century programming in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); the outdoors; entrepreneurship; and beyond, helping girls develop invaluable life skills and take the lead early and often; and

WHEREAS, Gold Award Girl Scouts already take on projects that have a measureable and sustainable impact on a community by first assessing a need, designing a solution, completing a project, and inspiring others to sustain it; and

WHEREAS, today, more than 50 million women are Girl Scouts alums; and

WHEREAS, Girl Scouts of Connecticut serves 13,258 girls across Connecticut.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Heather Maguire, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Chairperson of the Town Council of Avon, Connecticut, do hereby applaud the Girl Scout Movement and Girl Scouts of Connecticut for providing girls with a safe, inclusive, all-girl space where they can hone their skills and develop leadership abilities, and I declare March 12, 2021 to be Girl Scout Day.

#### **20/21-58      Fire Marshal/Emergency Management Director Position**

Chairperson Maguire reported that Jamie DiPace has retired and is currently working on an as-needed basis; this position is a Town Council appointment; the job announcement has gone out; it would be helpful to have a Town Council liaison as part of the interview process and she is willing to participate in that role. The Town Manager reported that it is the only Town staff position that is an appointment of the Town Council by Charter; there is a State statute that provides for it and requires the appointment to be made by the local legislative body and requires that applicants from the Avon Volunteer Fire Department receive preference in the process. All other Council members gave consensus for Chairperson Maguire to be the Town Council liaison for this process.

#### **20/21-59      Supplemental Appropriation: Patrol Building Generator Replacement, \$162,000**

Chairperson Maguire noted that this item was part of the capital plan for FY 21/22 with a phased in approach, but the generator did not last that long; we are currently renting a trailer mounted generator; and this appropriation will move the process along.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council favorably recommends to the Board of Finance an appropriation not to exceed \$162,000.00 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), Town CIP-Facilities, Patrol Building Improvements, Account #02-4829-53082, and Capital Projects Fund (Facil & Equip), Other Financing Sources, Interfund Transfers In, Account #02-0390-43918 not to exceed \$162,000.00 for the purpose of replacing the emergency generator at the Avon Police Department.

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

#### **20/21-60      Appointment: Assistant Town Attorney (AWPCA Matter)**

Chairperson Maguire reported that Council is being asked to appoint an assistant town attorney, as recommended by the Avon Water Pollution Control Authority (AWPCA), regarding a matter

the Town has with an inter-municipal agreement. She noted that Glenn Santoro, with Robinson & Cole, would be the partner in charge.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council appoint Robinson & Cole, as Assistant Town Attorney. Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Polhamus, Weber, and Speich voted in favor.

#### **20/21-61      Approval of Real Estate Tax Refund, \$4,501.54**

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council approve a real estate tax refund to Sarah McDonough & Patricia Olsen in the amount of \$4,501.54.

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 have deployed one of our hybrid police vehicles in the patrol unit; the second one is expected to be deployed this month; there are a few additional vehicle replacements to follow using funds appropriated last year; and that will retire the remaining Crown Victoria vehicles. She noted two upcoming RFPs, one for electric vehicle charging stations and the second for solar panels on the Roaring Brook School roof, both of which the Avon Clean Energy Commission have expressed interest in pursuing. In response to a question from Mr. Speich, the Assistant Town Manager responded that the hope is that a company will install, maintain and operate the electric vehicle charging stations through a lease agreement with the Town, that we might be able to take a cut of the revenue from the stations, and we are looking into phasing them starting with one or two and open to more in the future; a lot of details to still be worked out.

**Misc. B: Construction Update:** The Town Manager noted that the Geothermal System installation at the Library is underway; the light poles are up at Avon High School for the athletic lighting and the next critical part of the project is buffering which will require funding through an appropriation in the near future; Police Department renovations are moving along; and as we start heading into spring, a pavement management schedule will be developed to hit the problem areas.

**Misc. C: Planning and Community Development Specialist Retirement:** The Town Manager reported that John McCahill will be officially retiring after twenty-six years. He noted that we will continue our practice of allowing for some overlap; we are in the market now to fill the position and Mr. McCahill will continue on a temporary part-time basis into the new fiscal year to allow for the knowledge transfer to the person that fills the position.

The Town Manager noted that Connecticut Water Company filed for a rate case with Public Utility Regulatory Authority; Day Pitney is helping with this matter and we will be submitting comments on Tuesday next week; the hope is to phase in the increase versus all in one budget cycle.

The Town Manager appreciated the comments about the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD) and the vaccination clinics; the FVHD staff is working very hard to keep all of this going; they are grateful for the supplemental funding from the FVHD member towns. He recognized

Jennifer Worsman who is spending time working at the vaccination clinics and has been a big help to the FVHD. Chairperson Maguire asked the Town Manager to extend thanks to the FVHD for all that they are doing and doing so well.

**X.     EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to 1-200 6 (c) to Discuss Matters of Security Strategy Collective Bargaining**

The Town Manager reported that a few updates were provided to Council in their background memo which do not require any further discussion in Executive Session at this time.

**XII.   ADJOURN**

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m.  
Mrs. Maguire, Messrs: Bernetich, Speich, Polhamus, and Weber voted in favor.

Attest: Jennifer Worsman, Clerk