



Town of Avon Newsletter

ISSUE LVII

January 2019

FY 2019/2020 Budget Process

The process is well underway to prepare the FY 2019/2020 budget that takes effect on July 1, 2019. All town departments have submitted their capital and operating budgets, and Town Council will review the Town Manager's proposed budget at a workshop scheduled for February 23rd. Residents who are interested in participating in the process are encouraged to attend the following meetings, during which details of the budget will be discussed:

Town Council Budget Workshop: The workshop will be held on Saturday, February 23rd in the Selectmen's Chamber at Town Hall beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending by 1:00 p.m. The complete budget calendar is available on-line at: www.avonct.gov.

Board of Finance Meetings: The public hearing on the budget will be held on Monday, April 1st at 7:00 p.m. at the Avon Senior Center. Residents wishing to provide the Board of Finance with input about the budget are welcome to attend.

Tax Relief For Elderly and Disabled Homeowners

In January 2017, the Town Council approved a two year extension of the Town's Elderly Property Tax Relief Program and raised the income limit from \$55,000 to \$57,500. Homeowners who are age 65 or older or totally disabled may be eligible for up to \$2,250 (for a married couple) or \$2,000 (for an unmarried individual) in property tax relief through the Town's Elderly Property Tax Relief Program. To be eligible, you must have been 65 or older prior to 12/31/18, your adjusted gross income plus social security has to be \$57,500 or less, and you must have owned your home on October 1, 2018. The application filing period is February 1 through May 15, 2019. If you have any questions or feel you might be eligible, please contact the Assessor's Office at (860) 409-4335 for further information.

AFPL & Senior Center Earn Grants for Collaborative Programs

A team from the Library & Senior Center, led by Tina Panik and Jennifer Bennett, was recently awarded a grant of \$12,500 from the National Library of Medicine for a year long series on mental health and wellness, to begin in early 2019. The Senior Center also recently received a \$3,610 grant from the Avon Education Foundation for "The Lost Boys of Sudan and their Immigrant Experience," a Town-wide program involving the Library, the Senior Center, Thompson Brook School and Avon High School focusing on the experience of surviving genocide and life as a refugee will be presented. Thanks to AFPL & Senior Center staff for pursuing grant opportunities that provide residents with diverse programming and keep costs low!

Projects Approved at Referendum

Voters approved two projects at the December 12th referendum: the **Town & Public Safety Communications System Replacement Project** and the **Avon High School Synthetic Turf Field & Track Improvement Project**. We anticipate that the Communication System Project will get underway in January, with a projected completion date of spring 2020. Construction on the Turf Field & Track Project will likely begin in June, with a projected substantial completion date of fall 2019. Updates will be posted on the Town's website periodically.

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From the Avon Volunteer Fire Department

Thank you to everyone who supported the Avon Volunteer Fire Department in 2018 – from financial contributions; to donating at our food and blood drives; to participating in our 75th Anniversary events, including the carnival and food truck festival and parade; and more. We are grateful for you.

Some reminders:

Snow Removal

As the snow piles up this winter, please make sure to dig out any and all fire hydrants near your home or office. It is imperative that firefighters be able to access the hydrants quickly when needed.

Check Your Smoke and CO Alarms

We talk about replacing batteries when we change the clocks, but you should test your smoke and CO alarms monthly – make sure they are working and they have not expired. To find a smoke alarm's expiration date, simply look on the back of the alarm for the date of manufacture. The alarm should be replaced 10 years from *that* date (*not* the date of purchase).

Help Us Help You

There are 26,000 firefighters in the State of Connecticut. Eighty-three percent of them are volunteer. In Avon, our Fire Department is 100 percent volunteer, and we can always use more help. Whether you want to be a firefighter or an administrative assistant or anything in between, if you have the time and desire, we have a job for you and will provide all the training necessary.

Find the AVFD online at www.AvonVFD.org and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AvonVFD.

Easy Energy-Saving Tips for Winter

The Avon Clean Energy Commission offers residents these inexpensive (or free!) tips to save energy, save money & stay warm this winter! (source: U.S. Department of Energy)

Use the sun as a natural heating source – open the curtains on your south facing windows during the day to provide your home with natural heat.

Cover drafty windows – adhere clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames or use insulating drapes on drafty windows.

Monitor your thermostat – when at home and awake, set your thermostat as low as is comfortable. When you are sleeping or out of the house, set your thermostat 10 – 15 degrees below your “comfortable” temperature. Programmable thermostats can make this easy.



Use the ceiling fan – most ceiling fans allow you to rotate the blades in reverse (counter-clockwise) during the winter, pushing warm air near the ceiling down toward the floor. Be sure to reset to clockwise when the warm weather comes back around!

Seal air leaks and gaps – around plumbing penetrations, chimneys, recessed lighting, outside facing baseboards, and unfinished spaces behind closets. Caulk, weather-strip, or use spray foam around doors and windows. Insulate electrical outlets, basements and attics.

Maintain heating systems – schedule or complete routine maintenance on your heating systems.

Reduce fireplace heat loss – keep the damper closed unless a fire is burning. If you never use your fireplace, consider plugging and sealing the chimney flue.

Turn down the temperature of your water heater – use the warm setting (120° F). You'll save energy and avoid scalding your hands!



AWPCA Considers Change to Sewer Use Fees

In 2019, the Avon Water Pollution Control Authority (AWPCA) will consider changes to the residential sewer use fee for fiscal year 2019/2020. The residential sewer use fee is the annual charge that residential property owners pay to have their home connected to the sanitary sewer collection system. Currently, residential customers pay a fixed, or “single tier” fee, while commercial customers pay for treatment based on water consumption.

This consideration follows a 2018 cost of service study conducted by the AWPCA through an independent, third party consultant, which was aimed at modeling and evaluating the future of the Town’s Sewer Fund. The Sewer Fund supports the operating and capital expenses of the Town’s sanitary sewer system and is funded entirely through user fees, rather than the general tax levy. The cost of service study provided a number of recommendations regarding changes to the sewer use fee structure that the AWPCA might consider to ensure the continued financial health of the Sewer Fund.

One of the recommendations contained in the study, and echoed in suggestions from residents at an AWPCA public hearing held in April 2018, is the incorporation of a water consumption component into the residential sewer use fee. One of the benefits of this rate design would be that residents willing to undertake water conservation measures would experience lower sewer use fees. In addition to considering a fee structure based on water consumption, the AWPCA is also considering alternate rate structures based on a variety of factors such as lot size, number of bedrooms, number of fixtures, or square footage.

As of this writing, the benefits, drawbacks, and particular details of each of these rate structure concepts are being determined by the AWPCA. The AWPCA intends to solicit public input on these concepts through one or more public information meetings to be held in late winter or early spring. Of course, any change to the current user fee structure will be subject to a public hearing before the AWPCA prior to approval. This public hearing will most likely be held in March or April 2019. We anticipate that the AWPCA will provide the public with a status update in the April edition of the Town newsletter.

We encourage residents to attend these events, and/or submit written comments to the AWPCA via the Town’s Engineering Department. As these meetings are scheduled, more information will be posted on the Town’s website. Residents may also sign up for alerts from the AWPCA, as well as other Town Boards, Commissions and Departments by visiting www.avonct.gov/subscribe. If you have more specific questions at this time, please contact the Engineering Department at (860) 409-4322.

Real Estate & Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes

The second installment of the real estate and supplemental motor vehicle taxes (vehicles replaced or purchased new between October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2018), which became due January 1, 2019, must be paid by February 1st to avoid State mandated interest charges. The Revenue Office is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Town Offices will be closed January 21st in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Payments can also be made online. Go to www.avonct.gov and click the green button, “Pay Taxes Online” in the middle of the home page. Any questions? Please call the Collector of Revenue Office at (860) 409-4306. Thank You!

Want to receive up-to-date information from Town Boards, Commissions and Departments?

Subscribe to News on the Town’s website!

Visit www.avonct.gov/subscribe and select the types of alerts you would like to receive straight to your mailbox.

It’s an easy way to stay connected to what’s going on in your community!



Avon PD Home to Regional Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS)

Did you know the Avon Police Department has an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) and three Federal Aviation Administration certified Remote UAS Pilots?



In spring 2018, Officers John O'Neill, Mark Vess and Eric Lundell became certified Remote UAS Pilots and in October, the Avon Police Department accepted delivery of a brand new UAS, also known as a drone.

UAS are cutting-edge technology that are ideal for police work because they can reach places that a vehicle or an officer on foot may not be able to access in a safe or timely manner. Chief Mark Rinaldo recognized these benefits and championed the purchase of a UAS for use by all police departments in the North Central Municipal Emergency Services Council.

As a result, an industrial-grade UAS was purchased using regional funds and the Avon Police Department will house and maintain the equipment. The Department anticipates utilizing the UAS for search

and rescue operations, traffic accident investigations and other police-related activities, in Avon and throughout the region. The UAS also includes a thermal imaging camera, which will be useful in conducting night searches or in assisting the Avon Volunteer Fire Department in locating hotspots following a brush or structure fire.

Officers O'Neill, Vess, and Lundell welcome any questions the public may have regarding the new UAS and are pleased to give demonstrations to community groups upon request. Please contact them at (860) 409-4200.

2018 Holiday Basket Program

Avon Social Services, Avon Youth Services, and the Avon Food Pantry would like to thank all the incredible sponsors who helped provide for the Thanksgiving and the Winter Holiday food baskets! The generosity of our sponsors who helped to brighten so many families' holiday celebrations with presents, food and gift cards was overwhelming!

Our sponsors and donors are incredibly important, but without the tireless, generous and fiercely dedicated efforts of **Jim and Barbara Martino**, the Avon Food Pantry, and its programs, would not exist. The Town is deeply grateful to the Martino family!

Christmas Tree Pick Up

The Public Works Department began picking up Christmas trees on Wednesday, January 2, 2019. There is no established schedule with this pick up. Multiple passes will be made throughout the Town until all trees have been picked up. The last day for pick up will be January 31st.

Annual Report & Calendar

Residents are reminded that a limited number of the Town's Annual Report and Calendar are available for pickup in the Town Manager's Office at Town Hall, or at the Avon Free Public Library, Senior Center and Landfill. Please come get one while they last!

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING INFORMATION PRINTED IN THIS NEWSLETTER, CALL THE TOWN
MANAGER'S OFFICE, AVON TOWN HALL, AT (860) 409-4300.



Warm Welcomes, Well Wishes, & Fond Farewells

The Town would like to welcome some new faces, offer congratulations to those employees that were promoted or retired in 2018, and wish two of our staff members well as they prepare for deployment this year.

Please join us in welcoming **Dispatcher Nicole L'Heureux**, **Officer Jacob Whitty** and **Officer Iwona Dabek** to the Avon Police Department. Nicole has been on the job since March 2018 and Officers Whitty and Dabek joined the Town in July and October, respectively. In May, **Victoria DiCenso** began her work as the Administrative Secretary in the Engineering Department. We welcomed **Rich McKinnon** to the Building Department as the new Assistant Building Official in September. In November, **Rachel A-Massih** began her duties as Assistant Collector of Revenue and **Christine Pescatore** came aboard as the new Social Services Assistant. Finally, in December, **Susan Guimaraes** joined the Planning Department's team as the part-time Administrative Secretary. A warm welcome to all!

Congratulations to Building & Grounds Foreman **Paul Hoekman** on his March 2018 promotion. Paul previously served as a Building & Grounds Maintainer, and as the Acting Building & Grounds Foreman. A round of applause also goes out to **Sergeant Ryan Cuscovitch** who was promoted from Officer in September. Congratulations also go out to **Bruce Appell**, the new Chief of the Avon Volunteer Fire Department. Best of luck to Paul, Ryan, and Bruce in their new roles!

We would like to wish **Bill Vernile** well on his retirement. Bill served the Town as the Director of Human Resources for seventeen years and retired in June 2018. We would also like to congratulate **Chief Mike Trick** of the Avon Volunteer Fire Department on his retirement in December. Thank you, Bill and Mike, for your service and dedication to the Town, its employees and volunteers, and its residents over the years. We wish you well on your next adventures!

Finally, we offer our wishes for a safe deployment to **Officer Mark Arbogast** and **Officer William Forster** of the Police Department, as they prepare to deploy to Afghanistan with the U.S. Marine Corps in January 2019. We ask the community to keep Mark, William and their families in your thoughts over the coming months.

News from Social Services

- **CT Energy Assistance Program:** The State of Connecticut can help households pay for primary heating bills (i.e. oil, propane, electric, and gas). To be eligible, the gross annual household income must be less than 200% of the federal poverty income guidelines and the applicant must meet a certain limit for assets. If you have never applied and/or are interested in receiving more information on this program, please visit our website, www.avonct.gov, click "Social Services" under Departments and use the "Energy Assistance & Renters Rebate" link, or call our office at (860) 409-4346 to see if you may qualify. **Applications are by appointment only and the deadline is April 30th.**
- **Operation Fuel** may be able to provide one-time assistance with heating bills for those households who have applied for the CT Energy Assistance Program and were found to be slightly over income/asset limits. All those interested must apply for the CT Energy Assistance Program before contacting Operation Fuel. More information is available through Gifts of Love at (860) 676-2323.



AARP Foundation Tax-Aide offers free tax assistance to middle and low income taxpayers through April 17th. Special attention is given to those 50 and older. Appointments are required. For more information or to schedule an appointment call the Avon Senior Center at (860) 675-4355.

Avon Recreation Summer Program
Registration will begin at the end of April. Sycamore Hills Pool memberships will be sold online starting at the end of April. More detailed information will be sent out soon.

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IMPORTANT DATES

Town Council Budget Workshop
Saturday, February 23, 2019
Town Hall - Selectmen's Chamber
8:00 a.m.

FY 2019/2020
Annual Budget Public Hearing
Monday, April 1, 2019
Avon Senior Center
7:00 p.m.