



Town of Avon Newsletter

ISSUE LX

January 2020

Save the Dates! FY 2020/2021 Budget Process

The process to prepare the FY 2020/2021 budget that takes effect on July 1, 2020 is well underway. All town departments have submitted their capital and operating budgets and **Town Council** will review the Town Manager’s proposed budget at a **Budget Workshop** scheduled for **February 8th** in the Selectmen’s Chamber at Town Hall beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending by 1:00 p.m. Details of the proposed budget will be presented and discussed with the Council at this time and the public is welcome to attend.

The **Board of Finance** will hold a **Public Hearing** on the budget on **Monday, April 6th** at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center. Residents wishing to provide the Board of Finance with input about the budget are welcome to attend and offer comments. The **Board of Finance Budget Workshop** will be held on **Tuesday, April 7th** at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center. During the workshop, the Board will consider the comments from the public hearing and determine the budget that will appear on the ballot at the Budget Referendum in May. Following this determination, changes cannot be made to the budget before the Referendum. Please note there is no opportunity for public comment at the Board of Finance Budget Workshop, but residents are welcome to attend.

Please visit the Town’s website, www.avonct.gov, to access documents related to the budget process, including the budget calendar, the proposed operating budget in its entirety, and the Town Manager’s Budget Message which includes a high level summary of the budget. We expect that the budget document will be posted in late January, and will be updated in March and again in May as the budget process progresses.

We also recommend that you **Subscribe to News** on the Town’s website to receive email notifications of Town Council, Board of Education and Board of Finance agendas, as these Boards have a direct role in the budget process. Finally, as always we encourage you to share your questions and comments with the Town Manager’s Office at (860) 409-4300 or info@avonct.gov.

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, 2018 - September 30, 2019), which became due January 1, 2020, must be paid by February 3rd 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 20th 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!



Need help filing your 2019 tax return? The AARP Tax Preparation program is here to help! The AARP Foundation Tax-Aide offers free tax assistance to middle and low income tax payers. Special attention is given to those 50 and older. The program will be held Wednesdays from February 5 to April 15 at the Senior Center. Please call the Avon Senior Center at (860) 675-4355 to schedule an appointment.

Inside this issue:

<i>Construction is Underway at the Avon Village Center!</i>	2
<i>AWPCA Approves FY 19/20 Sewer Fees & Considers Future Changes</i>	3
<i>News from Social Services</i>	4
<i>Avon Youth Services</i>	4
<i>Tax Relief for Elderly and Disabled Homeowners</i>	5
<i>Green Resolutions for 2020</i>	5



Construction is Underway at the Avon Village Center!



As motorists passing on Route 44 will note, construction on the Avon Village Center development is well underway! Excavation has begun again and infrastructure, including the construction of sewer, water, gas and electrical lines, is now being installed. The concrete foundations for several buildings, including the anchor tenant building, Whole Foods, have been permitted and installation has begun. The installation of infrastructure is a massive, highly-detailed undertaking that will take some time to ensure that each component is located correctly so that the systems will function as intended.

Drivers have probably also noticed that two temporary roadways have been installed to minimize inconvenience to drivers during construction. Climax Road via Route 44 has been completely closed to traffic and a temporary roadway has been installed to allow access to the Mews and the other development on the west end of Bickford Drive. A second temporary road has been constructed to allow access to the northern section of Climax Road, above the former intersection of Bickford Drive/Climax Road, via Ensign Drive/Bickford Drive. We anticipate that traffic will be shifted to these temporary roadways until November 2020. Town staff is working closely with the developer to ensure that this schedule is met.

The multi-use trail that travels under Route 44, through the Town Hall complex and the development, is currently closed while sewer and infrastructure work is completed in this area. We anticipate that the trail will be reopened to the public in early spring 2020.

Looking ahead, the developer has advised that five retail/office buildings will be under construction or in operation by November 2020 and there are future plans to add residential housing units to the development as well. This balance of commercial, office and residential is intended to provide a solid mix of uses that will benefit all segments of the community.

We certainly recognize that certain construction activities can be disruptive however, Town staff is coordinating with the developer to ensure that disturbances are kept to a minimum and to address concerns as quickly as is feasible. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation. As always, if you have any questions about the development, please call the Planning Department at (860) 409-4328.

Fond Farewells

We would like to recognize a number of Town officials that stepped down at the end of 2019. Thank you to outgoing Town Council members Bill Stokesbury and David Pena for their years of dedicated service to the Town of Avon. Bill served the community for fourteen years, with eight years on the Board of Education, followed by six years on the Town Council. David served for a total of twenty-one years, first for nine years on the Planning & Zoning Commission and then for twelve years on the Town Council.

We thank Dean Hamilton for eight years of outstanding service on the Board of Finance. We would also like to recognize and express our gratitude to Houston Putnam Lowry for fourteen years on the Board of Education. Finally, a big thanks to Stephen Hunt for his sixteen years of service on the Board of Assessment Appeals. We would also like to acknowledge the service of all those outgoing members of appointed commissions.

On behalf of the residents of Avon, we wish to thank all of our outgoing elected and appointed officials for the essential service that you performed for your community during your tenure. We are grateful that you chose to spend your limited leisure time by volunteering and sharing your talents with us. Best wishes on your future endeavors!



AWPCA Approves FY 19/20 Sewer Fees & Considers Future Changes

Residential Sewer Use Fee: On November 14, 2019, the Avon Water Pollution Control Authority (AWPCA) conducted a public hearing to determine the residential sewer use fee policy for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 (FY 2019/2020). During the hearing, the proposed changes to the current policy were presented and there was an opportunity for public comment. Following the hearing, the AWPCA approved the following policy for the residential sewer use fee:

For fiscal year 2019/2020, the residential sewer use fee will be billed in two fixed cost installments. The first installment of \$250.00 will be billed in advance of, and due on, April 1, 2020. The second installment of \$265.00 will be billed in advance of, and due on, October 1, 2020.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the AWPCA also directed staff to continue to develop a proposal for a sewer use fee that incorporates a usage-based component. To that end, in addition to the fixed-rate October 2020 bill of \$265.00, residential sewer users will also receive a sample bill illustrating what their use fee would be based on their fiscal year 2019/2020 water usage. The purpose of the sample bill is to show users how their water use will correlate to future consumption-based fees. We anticipate that beginning in fiscal year 2020/2021, for residential accounts, the April installment will be a fixed rate and the October installment will be based primarily on water usage. Water usage data is provided by the Connecticut Water Company.

The AWPCA recognizes that adjustments to this fee schedule may be necessary when it comes to residential customers that use a significant volume of water for irrigation, users with private wells, and “de minimus” users. The following alternatives are being considered for users with these circumstances:

- Significant Irrigation – An alternative calculation to account for the high volume of water that is used by an irrigation system, but does not enter the sanitary sewer system, is under consideration. The calculation would eliminate the two highest-use quarters and double the volumes used during the two lowest-use quarters to provide an average annual use. This adjusted average annual water usage would be the basis for establishing sewer use for these customers.
- Private Well Users – Residential customers with private wells will likely be charged one of two ways: (1) based on the average water use by homes with the same bedroom count utilizing the public water supply, or; (2) a fixed fee. Staff continue to evaluate CT Water Company data to determine the most appropriate approach.
- “De Minimus” Users – We anticipate that a minimum use charge will be established for customers that use the system minimally.

Commercial Sewer Use Fee: As of this writing, the AWPCA has not established the calendar year 2019 sewer use fee for commercial accounts, however it is likely that the commercial use fee, which is based on water usage from the previous calendar year, will not change. We expect that the AWPCA will conduct a public hearing on this matter in spring 2020.

Questions: AWPCA meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of each month in the Selectmen’s Chamber at Town Hall. All meetings are open to the public and all minutes and agendas can be found on the Town’s website. Please address all questions to the Avon Engineering Department via the AWPCA Clerk, Vicky DiCenso, at vdicenso@avonct.gov or (860) 409-4322.

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.



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, under the Social Services link (“Energy Assistance & Renters Rebate”), or, call our office at (860) 409-4346, to see if you may qualify. **Applications are by appointment only! Program 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.

Avon Youth Services

Avon Youth Services is hosting a viewing of the documentary, *Angst*, an IndieFlix Original, designed to raise awareness around anxiety. The film includes interviews with kids, teens, educators, experts, parents and a very special interview with Michael Phelps. This Community event will be held at 5:30 p.m. on January 29, 2020 in the Avon High School Auditorium. For more information please visit <https://www.avonct.gov/social-services>, under **News & Announcements**.

2019 Holiday Food and Gift Programs

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 and gift program! The generosity of our sponsors helped brighten so many families’ holiday celebrations with presents, food and gift cards.

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 volunteers, 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 Thursday, January 2, 2020. 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.



Tax Relief for Elderly and Disabled Homeowners

In March 2019, the Town Council approved the continuance of the Town Elderly Tax Relief Program at the current income limit of \$57,500. Homeowners who are age 65 or older or totally disabled may be eligible for up to \$2,300 (for a married couple) or \$2,050 (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 12/31/19, your adjusted gross income plus social security has to be \$57,500 or less, and you must have owned your home on October 1, 2019. The application filing period is February 1 through May 15, 2020. If you have any questions or feel you might be eligible, please contact the Assessor's Office at (860) 409-4335 for further information.

Green Resolutions for 2020

Kick-off the new year by implementing a few sustainable practices into your everyday routine. Here are ten ideas to start your year off just a little bit greener!

- **BYOB (bring your own bag).** CT began phasing out plastic bags in October 2019. Start 2020 by making a more conscious effort to remember to bring those reusable bags (and save \$0.10!) every time you shop. Always forgetting your bags at home? Try stashing them strategically around the house and the car, listing them as the first item on your shopping list, or investing in bags that attach to your keyring or fit in a purse or pocket.
 - **Eat more plants.** Plant-based foods produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, less pollution, and use less water and land than animal-based foods like meat and dairy. First time trying an all-veg diet? Start slowly by trying "Meatless Mondays."
 - **Avoid Fast Fashion.** Did you know that nearly 3/5 of all clothing ends up in incinerators or landfills within a few years of being produced? The solution? Only buy what you need and choose timeless styles and materials that will last for years. Shop small with local retailers and consider organizing clothing swaps with friends, or purchasing used from thrift stores and consignment shops.
 - **BYOB (bring your own bottle!).** No need to purchase cases of bottled water when you have reusable bottles on hand. Not crazy about your tap water? Invest in a good water filter.
 - **Detox your cleaning products.** According to the EPA, household cleaning products are among the most toxic everyday substances people come into contact with. Try phasing in green cleaning products made with ingredients like water, white vinegar, and baking soda. You can even make them at home and save a few dollars!
 - **Choose to Reuse.** Instead of tossing an item, try to repurpose it. With Pinterest at our fingertips the possibilities for upcycling are endless! Additionally, before purchasing new items, research reusable options to shop smarter.
 - **Reduce food waste.** The EPA says that food scraps and yard waste make up more than 28% of what we throw away. By learning to properly store your food (fridge versus pantry) for optimal shelf life, meal planning, shopping in smaller volumes more frequently, and composting your scraps at home, you can keep food waste out of landfills where it takes up space and releases potent methane gas.
 - **Shop local or grow your own.** Support your neighbors' businesses and leave a smaller environmental footprint by shopping locally. For perishables, try local farms, like Avon's very own Sub Edge Farm. Want to garden but don't have the space? Check out the Recreation Department's community garden at Alsop Meadows. Refer to the Department's Winter/Spring 2019/20 brochure for details.
 - **Learn "What's In and What's Out."** Finally, figure out what belongs in that blue bin by visiting www.recyclect.com. Become a recycling expert and educate your friends!
 - **Reduce energy use.** Consider carpooling, walking, biking, or public transportation as an alternative to driving when feasible. At home, change your light bulbs to LED, replace fixtures and appliances with energy efficient models and consider implementing renewable energy installations like solar panels.
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IMPORTANT DATES

Town Council Budget Workshop
Saturday, February 8, 2020
Town Hall - Selectmen's Chamber
8:00 a.m.

FY 2020/2021
Annual Budget Public Hearing
Monday, April 6, 2020
Avon Senior Center
7:00 p.m.