



# Town of Avon Newsletter

ISSUE LXIII

January 2021

## Save the Dates! FY 2021/2022 Budget Process

**Note to readers:** The information provided in this article may be subject to change based on Executive Orders issued by Governor Lamont. Any updates to this schedule will be shared via the Town's website as they become available.

The process to prepare the FY 2021/2022 budget that takes effect on July 1, 2021 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 virtual **Budget Workshop** scheduled for Saturday, February 6th 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 5th** at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center, or virtually. Residents wishing to provide the Board of Finance with input about the budget are welcome to attend and offer comments. Information regarding the process for making comments will be provided via the Town's website prior to the public hearing. The **Board of Finance Budget Workshop** will be held on **Wednesday, April 7th** at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center, or virtually. 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](http://www.avonct.gov), to access documents related to the budget process. 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**" on the Town's website under **Citizen Action Center** 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 [budgetcomments@avonct.gov](mailto:budgetcomments@avonct.gov).

## Tax Relief for Elderly and Disabled Homeowners

On December 3, 2020, 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 12/31/20, your adjusted gross income plus social security has to be \$57,500 or less, and you must have owned your home on October 1, 2020. The application filing period is February 1 through May 15, 2021. If you have any questions or feel you might be eligible, please contact the Assessor's Office at (860) 409-4335 for further information.

### Inside this issue:

Reminders from the Public Works Department	2
AWPCA Discusses Changes to Sewer Use Fee Policy	3
News from Social Services	4
Real Estate & Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes	4
Town Honored with Sustainable CT Certification	5
Avon Chamber Reminds Residents of Local First Initiative	5



The Avon Senior Center is planning to offer AARP Tax Prep again this year. Due to the pandemic, as of this writing, program details are not yet available. Please call the Senior Center at (860) 675-4355 for more information.



## Reminders from the Public Works Department

**Mailbox Damage:** In accordance with current postal guidelines, all mailboxes should be 9 inches from the curb or edge of pavement when no curb exists. The height of the bottom of the mailbox should be between 42" and 48" from the road surface and should be securely fastened to a sturdy post which is sufficiently anchored in the ground to resist the impact of plowed snow.

If a mailbox is struck by a Town snowplow, the town will reimburse the owner an amount not to exceed \$65.00 for the post and an amount not to exceed \$20.00 for the box for a total of \$85.00, at the discretion of the Director of Public Works. Payment will not include costs other than materials and will not cover the cost of decorative wood or metal posts, or decorative boxes.

To report damage to a mailbox, please visit [www.avonct.gov](http://www.avonct.gov), look under the **Citizen Action Center** and select **Report a Concern**. Or, you may call DPW at (860) 673-6151.

**Remember:** Mailboxes that are damaged from the force of snow thrown against them are not eligible for reimbursement. For a complete description of the Town's Policy, please visit [www.avonct.gov](http://www.avonct.gov), under the Departments links, Public Works "Snow Policies."

**Public Sand/Salt Mix:** A sand and salt mix is available to residents at no charge at the Public Works Garage and at the Landfill. Please limit yourself to (1) five gallon pail.

## Building Official Explains Risk of Working without a Permit

The Building Department is often asked to provide Certificates of Occupancy for portions of residential or commercial properties that were previously altered without permits or inspections. These requests usually come from owners who have unknowingly purchased a property with unpermitted work, or owners who completed unpermitted work themselves and are now trying to close on the sale of their property. In order to resolve these issues the owner must obtain the proper permits retrospectively and allow the Building Department to perform inspections, even if that requires opening walls or otherwise uncovering finished work. The retrospective permits will be subject to an additional fee of \$1,000 or 100% of the original permit, whichever is less (*Section 9-23(b) Avon Town Code*). The owner will be required to correct any work that is not code compliant, have it approved by the Building Official, and then receive a Certificate of Occupancy.

While we can certainly empathize with residents in these situations, it is critical that the public recognize and understand the obligation of the Department to protect the safety and health of the community, including current and future owners and their visitors, by enforcing the Building Code. So, while it may seem simple to provide a property with a conditional approval or a Certificate of Occupancy without an inspection for the sake of expediency, to do so would completely disregard our duty to the public to ensure code compliance. While we aim for voluntary compliance from all, if an owner is unwilling to bring unpermitted work into compliance, the Town may be obliged to follow the procedures outlined in the Building Code.

To assist residents, a list of projects for which permits are not required is available on the Building Department page of the Town's website, [www.avonct.gov](http://www.avonct.gov). Please call (860) 409-4316 with questions.



### Christmas Tree Pick Up

The Public Works Department began picking up Christmas trees on Monday, January 4, 2021. 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 29th.



## AWPCA Discusses Changes to Sewer Use Fee Policy

On December 10, 2020, the Avon Water Pollution Control Authority (AWPCA) discussed potential changes to the commercial and residential sewer use fee policy in preparation for a public hearing on the matter anticipated to be held on February 11, 2021. Details of the proposed policy changes will be provided in advance of the meeting via the Town's AWPCA web page [www.avonct.gov/water-pollution-control-authority](http://www.avonct.gov/water-pollution-control-authority). **Please note that the following article and proposed policy pertains only to residents and business owners with properties that are connected to the public sewer system.**

**Commercial Sewer Use:** The AWPCA is proposing an increase in the sewer use fee for commercial accounts from \$515 per Equivalent Business Unit (EBU) to \$600 per EBU for calendar year 2020. Commercial use is based on water usage from the previous calendar year.

**Residential Sewer Use:** Over the last several years, staff and the AWPCA have developed a proposal for a sewer use fee that incorporates a usage based component. The following proposal is being considered for implementation at this time:

- The annual residential sewer use charge will continue to be billed semi-annually, with a portion of the bill due in April and the remainder due in October.
- All residential users will be billed a flat rate of \$250.00 in April 2021. Please note that this is identical to the April 2020 bill.
- The October 2021 bill is proposed to be structured as follows:
  - Residents connected to the public sewer who get their water from a private well will be charged a fixed fee since it is not feasible to meter and monitor well water. The fee will likely be lower than the 2020 charge.
  - Apartment complex owners will be charged a fixed fee per apartment unit. The fee will likely be lower than the 2020 charge.
  - Single family dwellings that are connected to the Avon/Connecticut Water Company for domestic water, will be charged based upon the amount of water used, as reported by the water company's quarterly meter reading data. To accommodate water used for irrigation and other non-sewer related uses, the AWPCA has proposed to eliminate the two highest-use quarters from the calculation and annualize the remaining two quarters of data. There will be a minimum fee for annualized water use which will likely be lower than the 2020 charge.. (Note that the AWPCA has yet to determine either the minimum fee or the minimum use threshold.) Residents whose water use is greater than the determined minimum will be charged according to their actual water use.

In early January 2021, the Engineering Department should receive the Connecticut Water Company data for the previous year. The Department will then analyze the data and, using the fee structure outlined above, determine the specific user fees that will be required to meet the budgetary needs of the sewer system. With concurrence from the AWPCA, the Department will publish the proposed fees in advance of the February public hearing.

The AWPCA recognizes that there is no perfect solution to bill for sewer use. Please know that it is our goal to provide a fair and equitable billing program that makes the burden of paying for use of the public sewer system as easy as possible on our residents, while still meeting the obligation of managing the sewer system appropriately. We encourage you to attend the upcoming public hearing and share your comments. You may also call or email the Engineering Department via the AWPCA Clerk, Vicky DiCenso, at [vdicenso@avonct.gov](mailto:vdicenso@avonct.gov) or (860) 409-4322.

**Avon Recreation Summer Program and Pool Membership Registration will begin at the end of April online. Detailed information will be available on our website at [www.avonrec.com](http://www.avonrec.com).**



## 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](http://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.



## 2020 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 programs! 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 our volunteers, the Avon Food Pantry would not exist. We want to give a big thank you to Jim and Barbara Martino, Mary Lou Connors and all of the Food Pantry volunteers for all they do.

## Real Estate & Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes

The Town Council is pleased to announce that it will once again offer tax relief during the COVID-19 pandemic as authorized by Executive Order 9R. The Deferral Program provides a three month "grace period" to pay taxes without an interest penalty. The program will apply to the second installment of the real estate and supplemental motor vehicle taxes (vehicles replaced or purchased new between October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020), which became due January 1, 2021. **The last day to pay without State mandated interest penalties will be April 1st (original deadline was February 1st).**

All taxpayers are eligible unless their taxes are paid by an escrow agent, financial institution, mortgage service agent or bank. Landlords interested in participating must fill out the Form M COVID-19, available on the Collector of Revenue's webpage, and provide documentation that the property being taxed has suffered a significant income decline or that a commensurate forbearance has been offered to the tenants or lessees by **February 1st.**

The Revenue Office is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., however taxpayers should note that the exterior doors to Town Offices are locked at this time and access by members of the public is restricted to urgent business only via appointment. Town Offices will be closed on January 18th in observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. We encourage taxpayers to make use of our remote payment options including the drop box outside of Building #2, U.S. Mail, by phone, or by electronic check, debit or credit card (visit [www.avonct.gov](http://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!

---



## Town Honored with Sustainable CT Certification



The Town is pleased to share that it has achieved bronze-level certification through Sustainable CT, an action-oriented, voluntary certification program that focuses on a wide range of efforts that communities can take to improve their overall sustainability, resiliency, and inclusivity. Avon is one of seventeen municipalities that achieved a bronze or silver level certification in Sustainable CT's fall 2020 cycle. The Town's certification signifies that Avon has met high standards across nine impact areas, from the use of renewable energy in municipal buildings and the implementation of sustainable fleet management practices, to preserving historic assets and showcasing arts and culture. Thank you to the staff Sustainability Team, and Bill Shea of the Avon Clean Energy Commission for completing the Town's application. For more information, visit [www.sustainablect.org](http://www.sustainablect.org).

## Avon Chamber Reminds Residents of Local First Initiative

When you shop at a local business, a significant amount of the money you spend stays in the community and is reinvested in the form of taxes that help enhance public services, employment opportunities, support for local civic and non-profit organizations, and local business-to-business purchasing. Since 2015, the Avon Chamber of Commerce has spearheaded a **Local First** initiative that encourages area residents to look to our first-rate lodging, restaurants, shops, and service providers when choosing where to stay, shop, dine, or access a service.



A number of Avon Chamber member businesses are proud to offer residents a greater value through the **Local First Key Card Program**. Simply show your **Local First Key Card** at participating Avon Chamber member businesses to receive the discount or deal that they are offering. Visit [www.avonchamber.com/member\\_rewards.asp](http://www.avonchamber.com/member_rewards.asp) often for up-to-date offers. Need a **Local First Key Card**? Please email the Avon Chamber at [acocbookkeeper@sbcglobal.net](mailto:acocbookkeeper@sbcglobal.net) and include your name and mailing address. Thank you for joining us in shopping Local First!

## Warm Welcomes & Congratulations

The Town would like to welcome some new faces, and offer congratulations to those employees that have recently been promoted.

The Avon Police Department would like to congratulate **Officer Franklin Guth** on his recent graduation from the police academy. Officer Guth previously served in the U.S. Army on active duty for six years and was deployed to Afghanistan with the 10th Mountain Division as a Field Artillery Officer. Officer Guth is in the midst of a ten week field training program with senior officers. If you see him out in the community be sure to say hello! The PD would also like to congratulate **Eric Lundell** on his recent promotion to Sergeant! Sgt. Lundell has been with the Department for 17 years and is a veteran of the U.S. Army. He is a very familiar face in the Avon community as he most recently served as the Department's Community Relations Officer. Congratulations Sgt. Lundell!

We would also like to welcome **Tom DiStasio** to Avon in the role of Director of Finance. Tom has a background in accounting and most recently served as Business Manager for the Watertown Public Schools. We are delighted to have Tom join the management team! Finally, we would like to welcome **Karen Emery** to the Social Services team as their new part-time Social Services Assistant. Karen began her work this fall and has been busy assisting with a number of programs including the holiday food program. Welcome Karen!

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

**ISSUE LXIII**  
**January 2021**

Avon Town Council  
Town of Avon  
60 W. Main Street  
Avon, CT 06001

Phone: (860) 409-4300  
Fax: (860) 409-4368  
[www.avonct.gov](http://www.avonct.gov)



PRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
AVON, CT  
PERMIT No. 14



## **IMPORTANT DATES**

**Town Council Budget Workshop**  
**Saturday, February 6, 2021**  
*(Virtual Workshop)*  
**8:00 a.m.**

**FY 2021/2022**  
**Annual Budget Public Hearing**  
**Monday, April 5, 2021**  
**Avon Senior Center or Virtually**  
**7:00 p.m.**