



Town of Avon Newsletter

ISSUE LXVI

January 2022

Save the Dates! FY 2022/2023 Budget Process

Note: Any changes to the budget calendar or process due to Executive Orders issued in response to the pandemic will be posted on the Town's website.

The process to prepare the FY 2022/2023 budget that takes effect on July 1, 2022 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 5th 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 4th** 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 6th** 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 be presented at the Annual Town Meeting and 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. 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 Town News" 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.

Tax Relief for Elderly and Disabled Homeowners

At their meeting on December 2, 2021, the Town Council approved a two year extension of the Town's Elderly Property Tax Relief Program and raised the income limit from \$57,500 to \$61,800. Homeowners who are age 65 or older or totally disabled may be eligible for **up to \$2,340**. To be eligible, you must have been 65 or older prior to 12/31/21, your adjusted gross income plus social security has to be **\$61,800 or less**, and you must have owned your home on October 1, 2021. The application filing period is **February 1 through May 15, 2022**. If you have any questions or feel you might be eligible, please contact the Assessor's Office at (860) 409-4335 for further information.



AARP Foundation Tax-Aide offers free tax assistance to middle and low income taxpayers from February 2 through April 13. 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**.

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Reminders from the Public Works Department

Snow Removal: During snow events, the primary focus is to provide a safe travel way for cars and emergency vehicles on heavily traveled roadways. While snow is actively falling, plowing is generally limited to the center portion of the roadway to clear a path wide enough for one travel lane in each direction. As a winter storm subsides, more efforts can be directed to local roadways and cul-de-sacs. Depending on the severity of a storm, it can take up to 4 hours +/- to make passes on all streets in town. Snow removal often continues for 8 to 12 hours after snow has stopped falling.

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, 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, 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.



APD & AVFD Annual Toy Drive

On November 26, 2021, the Avon Police Department joined forces with the Avon Volunteer Fire Department in the Walmart parking lot to hold its annual toy drive benefiting Gifts of Love's Holiday Shoppe! The Holiday Shoppe gives families in our community an opportunity to shop and pick out holiday gifts for their children at no cost. APD and AVFD filled two large police SUVs with gifts and also collected several hundred dollars in cash donations which were used to purchase gift cards to be distributed by Gifts of Love. Thank you to everyone who came by and supported the annual toy drive!

Town Purchases Property Located at 503 West Avon Road

At its December 2, 2021 meeting, following a public hearing, the Town Council authorized the purchase of the property located at 503 West Avon Road for a purchase price of \$275,000. The Town subsequently took title to the property on January 4, 2022. The property is approximately four acres and is intended for general municipal use with no restrictions. The property currently includes a 784 square foot residence and a utility shed. The Town intends to demolish the structures in the coming months and the property will be restored to a grassy parcel. There are no immediate plans for the property, however it is important to note that the location is strategic for the Town given its close proximity to Avon High School and Fire Company #3. An appropriation from Unassigned General Fund Balance in the amount of \$313,000 was approved by the Town Council on December 2nd and the Board of Finance on December 20th to fund the purchase cost (\$275,000) and soft costs related to the purchase, including demolition of the structures (\$38,000). Unassigned General Fund Balance will most likely be reimbursed with an appropriation in the FY 2023 capital budget.



Town to Launch Online Permitting Platform

The Town is very pleased to announce that it is preparing to launch an online permitting platform called OpenGov Citizen Services ("Citizen Services")! Beginning **January 12th**, applications for permits issued by the **Engineering Department** may be submitted through the new platform. The **Building Department and Fire Marshal's Office** will follow with a launch scheduled for **February 2nd**. The new system will streamline the permit application and approval process for residents, contractors and staff alike.

Citizen Services is a cloud based permitting platform which will allow applicants to submit permit applications and other necessary documentation online, without a trip to Town Offices. Users will be able to track the status of their permit application in real-time as it is reviewed and approved by relevant departments. Users will also be able to monitor the inspection and close out process. The system will also provide an added convenience to users by accepting credit card payments.

Citizen Services will be accessible via the homepage of the Town's website, as well as on the Building Department, Fire Marshal's Office, and Engineering Department pages. To use the new platform, applicants will need to set up an account with Citizen Services. This can be done directly in the portal. Contractors that work in other towns in the region may already have an account with Citizen Services as the system is used by a number of other municipalities. Please note that submitting an application and payment through Citizen Services does not grant a permit. Permits will only be granted after review and approval by Town staff.

Staff in these departments will be pleased to help users to navigate the new system and respond to questions.

Town to Allocate American Rescue Plan Funding

The Town is set to receive \$5.4 million in federal funding under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The first payment of \$2.7 million was received in June 2021 and we expect the second payment of \$2.7 million to be received in June 2022. The Town is required to obligate the funds by December 2024 and spend the funds by December 2026. There are four eligible uses for the funds: (1) to respond to the public health emergency and its negative economic impacts; (2) to provide premium pay for essential workers; (3) to provide government services to the extent of revenue lost due to COVID-19; and (4) to make necessary improvements in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure.

At this time, staff are continuing to develop recommendation for projects including project descriptions, budgets and timelines for completion. In general, the projects that are being identified are included in the Town's long term Capital Improvement Plan; Master Planning Documents, such as the Plan of Conservation & Development; have been recommended by a third party professional, such as the Town's managed IT services provider; or fulfill a need that became apparent during the pandemic. Selected projects should meet one or more ARPA eligibility category; feasibly be completed within the required timeframe; result in little, or no, additional operating costs; and benefit the community. We anticipate that projects will be presented to the Town Council in tranches over the coming months for consideration. Use of ARPA funding will be authorized through the annual budget process or the Town's existing supplemental appropriations process which includes approval by the Town Council, and the Board of Finance. Please watch for updates on the Town's website. Have questions, comments, or project ideas? Please email Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager at gtiezzi@avonct.gov.

Christmas Tree Pick Up

The Public Works Department began picking up Christmas trees on Monday, January 3, 2022. 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.





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 May 31st.**
- ♦ **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.



2021 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!

We also want to give a big thank you to Jim Martino, Mary Lou Connors and all of the Food Pantry volunteers for all their tireless, generous and fiercely dedicated efforts running the Avon Food Pantry.

Avon Receives Grant Funding for Two Projects

The Town is pleased to announce that it was recently awarded a grant in the amount of \$72,000 to purchase a new ADA accessible van to provide Dial-A-Ride services to elderly and disabled residents. The grant is being funded by the Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 Program and will be administered by the CT DOT. The grant will fund the purchase of a new 12-14 passenger, lift-equipped vehicle and will replace a 2013 model with over 146,000 miles. The Town's Dial-A-Ride service provider, Martel Transportation, will operate and maintain the vehicle. We expect to take delivery of the vehicle in summer 2022. Thank you to Social Services staff for identifying and applying for this funding opportunity!

At its December 21, 2021 meeting, the State Bond Commission voted to approve a \$60,000 grant-in-aid to the Town of Avon for the replacement of a playscape at the Sycamore Hills Recreation Area. Special thanks go to our state representative, Eleni Kavros DeGraw, for securing this funding. The existing playscape is 27 years old and beyond its life expectancy. The Town expects to provide a local contribution to this project in the amount of \$15,000. Depending on the timing of the receipt of the state funding, we hope to place an order for the new playscape in late summer with installation planned for fall.



Avon Recreation Department's Summer Programs and Pool Membership registration will begin at the end of April **online**. Applications for summer employment are now being accepted. For complete details log on to www.avonrec.com.



Real Estate & Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes

The second installment of real estate and supplemental motor vehicle taxes (for those who purchased **OR** renewed motor vehicle registrations after October 1, 2020 thru September 30, 2021), which became due January 1, 2022, must be paid on or before February 1, 2022 to avoid State mandated interest charges. Any questions? Please call the Collector of Revenue Office at (860) 409-4306.

Turning the Lights Back On: How Eversource Restores Power following a Storm Event

Eversource begins restoration efforts as soon as work can be done safely. The first step in the restoration process is a damage assessment. Damage assessors are dispatched to sites where outages have been reported to assess the level of work necessary to restore power. Assessors don't make repairs but they assist those that do. This information is critical in determining restoration time. If you see an Eversource vehicle come into your neighborhood and then leave, most likely it's a damage assessor. Following the damage assessment, Eversource follows these established priorities in regards to storm restoration:

1. **Public safety**, including police and fire life safety calls, Level 1 E-911 calls and life threatening situations.
2. **Clearing blocked roads of electrical hazards**.
3. **Critical facilities**, such as police and fire stations, hospitals, schools, sewage and water plants. If these facilities are running on stable generator power, Eversource may move them lower on the list.
4. **Circuit backbones and lateral feeders**. These are transmission lines and substations followed by the larger "backbone" lines of the distribution network. Eversource repairs lines and substations based on how many customers are affected by each repair job.
5. From there, Eversource prioritizes distribution system repairs that restore **the most customers as quickly as possible**. Repairs that bring back only one or two customers are typically completed near the end of restoration.

Jobs from multiple categories may be in progress simultaneously. As Eversource works on these jobs, crews are also responding to less urgent community needs and priorities identified by local officials, such as clearing road obstructions that do not imperil public safety.

Residents sometimes ask why they haven't seen any crews in their neighborhood. This is most likely because (1) Eversource has to repair a larger issue such as a transmission line problem, before a more localized issue like a broken pole can be repaired; or (2) the cause of the outage may be with equipment miles away from your neighborhood.

As Eversource receives damage information, it will first issue restoration estimates for a broad area or region. Those broad estimates are then refined for estimates specific to affected towns. Both types of estimates represent the time of final restoration in the area. Many customers are restored earlier.

For more information on Eversource's storm preparation and response process, please visit www.avonct.gov/emergency-management and select "Eversource Power Restoration Process" from the menu on the left side of the page. This link will take you to the Eversource website. Information for this article is courtesy of www.eversource.com.

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

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IMPORTANT DATES

Town Council Budget Workshop

Saturday, February 5, 2022

(Virtual Workshop)

8:00 a.m.

FY 2022/2023

Annual Budget Public Hearing

Monday, April 4, 2022

Avon Senior Center or Virtually

7:00 p.m.