

TOWNSHIP OF VERNON

TOWNSHIP COUNCIL SPECIAL JOINT MEETING WITH THE VERNON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

December 15, 2011

The Special Joint Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon with the Vernon Township Board of Education was convened at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 15, 2011 in the Cedar Mountain Primary School, Vernon, New Jersey with Council President Brian Lynch presiding. The purpose of this joint meeting was to discuss assessed value of Vernon Township real estate and shared services.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate notice of this meeting had been provided to the public and the press on December 13, 2011, and was posted on the Township website in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-6.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Present were Council Members Pat Rizzuto, Dick Wetzel, and Council President Brian Lynch. Also present was Mayor Vic Marotta and Jerry Giaimis, Business Administrator. Council Members Eddie Dunn and Daniel Kadish were absent.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The President of the Vernon Township Board of Education, Mr. Castellana, led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

Mayor Marotta thanked the Board of Education for inviting the Township Council to participate in this joint meeting.

The Mayor noted that the Township Council and the Board of Education worked together to procure a permanent home for the Historical Society.

Mayor Marotta discussed the situation of assessed values of Vernon Township real estate. The 2012 municipal budget will be the same as the 2011 municipal budget. The Mayor spoke about our union contract negotiations which started in October with Jerry Giaimis, the Vernon Township Business Administrator doing a masterful job of negotiating. Two out of three of the union contracts have been settled. However, this does not mean that there will not be a tax increase. With every dollar of municipal tax, .60 goes to the Board of Education, .20 goes to the County and .20 goes to the Township.

Mayor Marotta asked the Board of Education to consider not increasing their budget, as the Township did not increase the budget. The Mayor spoke regarding the loss in assessed value of Township homes. We will be able to deliver no tax increase at the Municipal level. In Vernon Township, out of 8,900 residences, 900 are empty. There are over 500 homes in foreclosure in this Township. Vernon has a 97% tax collection rate and the Mayor stated our Tax Collection Department is doing a great job.

Council Member Wetzel stated that there is a movement by the Tax Payers Association to look into a re-assessment.

The President of the Board of Education questioned Council Members Rizzuto and Wetzel, since they were former members of the Board of Education, how the Board can budget responsibly. Council Member Wetzel suggested the combining of services between the Board of Ed and the Municipality. Weather forecasting services can be combined and also the sharing of equipment for the upkeep of the athletic fields.

Mayor Marotta also spoke of the attempt to eliminate Jersey Central Power and Light as the electric company in certain neighborhoods in Vernon, adding that Sue Diehn, Police Chief Wherry's secretary, has started a petition if anyone is interested in joining

this cause. They can contact her in the Police Department or residents can contact the Mayor's office.

Council President Brian Lynch spoke with Dr. Alfieri regarding the State trying to push through a mandatory shared services bill, wherein the municipalities that do not participate can be penalized by losing State Aid. Mr. Lynch stated that we should make it happen before someone tells them what they have to do.

Council Member Patrick Rizzuto stated that as the Board of Ed looks closely at each line item, they should ask if it is necessary at the time. The two elected bodies in this community are facing a tide of financial uncertainty. The lines of communication have been opened between the Board of Ed Superintendent and the Mayor. Mayor Marotta stated that the Council cannot presume to tell the Board of Ed how to deliberate regarding their negotiations.

Mayor Marotta reported that Federal aid reimbursement from Irene is coming in soon, as our Township was hit hard with Hurricane Irene.

Council President Brian Lynch thanked the Board of Ed for inviting the Township Council to this meeting, and would like to see both sides work on shared services. Mr. Lynch also invited the members of the Board of Ed to the Council's Reorganization Meeting on Tuesday, January 3, 2012 at the Municipal Center.

Council Member Rizzuto spoke regarding Senate Bill S2794, which not only is about shared services but consolidarity which is a further loss of Home Rule. Mr. Rizzuto contacted Senator Oroho and asked Board of Ed member, Cynthia Auberger, to have her organizations stall this bill.

At this time Council President Lynch opened the meeting to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Robert Oliver, [REDACTED] referenced the percent of taxes for each entity, and referenced difficulties of the Board of Ed to balance the budget due to prior commitments. Mr. Oliver asked questions regarding the turf field, which Mayor Marotta responded to.

Thomas McClachrie, Vernon Taxpayers Association, mentioned the loss of 126 million of taxable base. Mr. McClachrie also questioned the timing of the past revaluation and stated he is opposed to paying someone else's share of taxes.

Mayor Marotta reported that the loss of tax revenue is 2 million, the value of residential homes were increasing as condos and commercial property was decreasing. The Mayor is in favor of shared services between the Board of Ed and the Township.

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Dick Wetzel moved to adjourn the Council portion of the Special Joint Meeting of the Township Council and Board of Education of the Township of Vernon. Council Member Pat Rizzuto made the second; all were in agreement. The Township Council portion of the meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Bates
Deputy Municipal Clerk

Minutes approved: December 27, 2011

Brian Lynch, Council President