

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 29 2025 6:00 PM**

This Special Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 6:00 p.m. on December 29, 2025, in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Council President Rizzuto presiding.

**STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** Adequate Notice of this Special Meeting was provided to the public and the press on December 17, 2025, and was posted at the Municipal Building in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A.10:4-7. The purpose of this Special Meeting is to have the public hearing and adoption of ordinance #25-17.

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

Council President Rizzuto led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

**ROLL CALL**

Present were Council Members, Natalie Buccieri, Jessica DeBenedetto, William Higgins, and Council President Patrick Rizzuto. Also present were Mayor Anthony Rossi, Township Attorney Peter King and Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio.

Council Member Sparta was not present.

**ORDINANCE PUBLIC HEARING/ADOPTION**

**Ordinance #25-17:** Ordinance of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, New Jersey Approving Application for a Long Term Tax Exemption and Authorizing the Execution of a Financial Agreement with Omega Drive Redevelopment Urban Renewal, LLC

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open the floor for public hearing on ordinance #25-17.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the floor to the public for public hearing of ordinance #25-17.

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close the public hearing on ordinance #25-17.

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the floor to the public for public hearing of ordinance #25-17.

Attorney Matthew Jessup and Bryan Morris of Phoenix Advisors gave a presentation on ordinance #25-17 and explained the terms of the PILOT program.

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open the floor for public hearing on ordinance #25-17.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Doreen Edwards – is opposed to the PILOT ordinance.

Alton Ukella – is in support of the PILOT ordinance.

Jackie – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Marty – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Ann Larsen – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Bruce Campbell – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Peg Distasi -Spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Cherwyn Ambuter – asked the Council if they were accepting a bribe.

Tracy Crumb – questioned the PILOT ordinance.

Charles Cimaglia – questioned the PILOT ordinance.

Brain Fischer – spoke against the PILOT program.

Peter Knipe – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Patricia – questioned the PILOT program.

Steve Dunlop – spoke against the PILOT program.

Jonathan Kitchner – spoke against the PILOT program.

Joanna – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Jessi Paladini – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Megan – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

David – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Maria Brock – questioned the PILOT ordinance.

Paul Bastante – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Cathy – spoke against the PILOT program.

Jonathan Lebson – spoke against the PILOT program.

Seeing no other members of the public wishing to come forward, President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close the public hearing on ordinance #25-17.

MOVED: DeBenedetto

SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to close the floor to the public for public hearing of ordinance #25-17.

Council President Rizzuto called for a five-minute recess.

Matthew Jessup and Bryan Morris answered the publics questions.

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to adopt ordinance #25-17.

MOVED: Buccieri

SECOND: Higgins

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, Higgins, Rizzuto

NAYES: DeBenedetto

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to adopt ordinance #25-17.

### ORDINANCE #25-17

#### ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, NEW JERSEY APPROVING APPLICATION FOR A LONG TERM TAX EXEMPTION AND AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A FINANCIAL AGREEMENT WITH OMEGA DRIVE REDEVELOPMENT URBAN RENEWAL, LLC

**WHEREAS**, the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.* as amended and supplemented (the “**Redevelopment Law**”), provides a process for municipalities to participate in the redevelopment and improvement of areas in need of redevelopment; and

**WHEREAS**, on April 23, 2018, pursuant to Resolution 18-135, the Township Council (the “**Township Council**”) of the Township of Vernon (the “**Township**”) designated a total of 173 lots, including that certain property identified on the official tax maps of the Township as Block 403, Lots 2 and 3 (and previously identified as Block 141.02, Lots 2 and 3), as a non-condemnation “area in need of redevelopment” (the “**Redevelopment Area**”) in accordance with the Redevelopment Law; and

**WHEREAS**, on April 26, 2021, the Township Council adopted Ordinance No. 21-10, adopting the “Town Center Redevelopment Plan” for the Redevelopment Area, prepared by J. Caldwell & Associates, LLC, dated March 25, 2021 (as the same may be amended and supplemented from time to time, the “**Redevelopment Plan**”); and

**WHEREAS**, Omega Drive Redevelopment Urban Renewal, LLC (the “**Entity**”) is the owner of certain property within the Redevelopment Area identified as Block 403, Lots 2 and 3 on the official Tax Maps of the Township (the “**Property**”) and has proposed to redevelop the Property by constructing thereon a four-story, multi-family residential building containing a total of twenty-seven (27) residential rental units, including six (6) units affordable to low- and moderate-income families, forty-two (42) off-street parking spaces, two (2) of which will be designated as ADA-compliant, along with associated on-site and off-site improvements (collectively, the “**Project**”); and

**WHEREAS**, in order to improve the feasibility of the Project, the Entity submitted an application (the “**Application**”) to the Mayor of the Township for a long term tax exemption pursuant to the Long Term Tax Exemption Law, *N.J.S.A. 40A:20-1 et seq.* (the “**Exemption Law**”); and

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor submitted the Application and the form of financial agreement on file in the office of the Township Clerk and available for public inspection (the “**Financial Agreement**”) to the Township Council with his recommendation for approval, a copy of which recommendation is on file with the Township Clerk; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township Council has determined that the Project represents an undertaking permitted by the Exemption Law, and hereby finds that the relative benefits of the Project justify the long term tax exemption requested in the Application.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey as follows:

**Section 1.** The aforementioned recitals are incorporated herein as though set forth at length.

**Section 2.** The Township Council hereby approves the Application and the Financial Agreement. The Township Council hereby further approves the findings set forth in the Financial Agreement, consisting of the benefits of the Project versus costs, and the importance of the long term tax exemption.

**Section 3.** The Mayor is hereby authorized to execute the Financial Agreement substantially in the form on file in the office of the Township Clerk and available for public inspection, together with such additions, deletion, modifications, or revisions deemed necessary or desirable in consultation with counsel to the Borough.

**Section 4.** The Township Clerk is hereby authorized and directed, upon execution of the Financial Agreement by the Mayor, to attest to the signature of the Mayor and to affix the corporate seal of the Township upon such document.

**Section 5.** The Township Clerk shall file certified copies of this ordinance and the Financial Agreement with the Tax Assessor of the Township in accordance with Section 12 of the Exemption Law.

**Section 6.** In accordance with P.L. 2015, c. 247, within ten (10) calendar day following the later of the effective date of this ordinance or the execution of the Financial Agreement by the Entity, the Township Clerk also shall transmit a certified copy of this ordinance and the Financial Agreement to the chief financial officer of Sussex County and to the Sussex County counsel for informational purposes.

**Section 7.** The Mayor and the Township Clerk are hereby authorized to take such action and to execute such other documents, on behalf of the Township, in consultation with counsel, as may be necessary to effectuate the terms of the Financial Agreement.

**Section 8.** If any part(s) of this ordinance shall be deemed invalid, such part(s) shall be severed and the invalidity thereby shall not affect the remaining parts of this ordinance.

**Section 9.** A copy of this ordinance shall be available for public inspection at the offices of the Township.

**Section 10.** This ordinance shall take effect in accordance with applicable law.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to 5 Minutes Per Person)**

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open the meeting to Public Comments.

MOVED: Buccieri

SECOND: DeBenedetto

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the meeting to the public.

Doreen Edwards – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Jackie – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Ann Larsen – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Alton Ukella – spoke for the PILOT ordinance.

Jessi Paladini – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Unknown Man – spoke against the PILOT ordinance.

Unknown Man – spoke against PILOT ordinance and the decorum at the meeting.

Peter Knipe – spoke regarding the PILOT ordinance. Mr. Knipe spoke about the Economic Development Committee.

Seeing no other members from the public wishing to come forward, President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close the meeting to Public Comments.

MOVED: Higgins

SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to close the meeting to the public.

Mayor Rossi thanked Council Members Buccieri and DeBenedetto for their service on the Council.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member DeBenedetto expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the Vernon Town Council for two years, describing it as a fulfilling experience. She offered individual thanks and compliments to her fellow council members, the mayor, municipal staff, the PAL team, and first responders, while sharing a personal story of the police and EMS’s compassionate response during her son’s health episode. Finally, she regretfully announced her inability to run for re-election due to circumstances beyond her control, urged residents to treat each other with greater kindness, and bid an emotional farewell to the role.

Council Member Buccieri commented that it has been a great honor and privilege to serve the community on the Council. She is proud of the process that the Council has made while she was part of it.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:05 pm Council Member Buccieri made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member DeBenedetto.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR  
Municipal Clerk

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William Higgins  
Council President

Minutes approved: January 15, 2026