

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 8 2025 7:00 PM**

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on December 8, 2025, in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Council President Rizzuto presiding.

**STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE**

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided to the public and the press on January 19, 2025, and was posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-7.

**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, Business Administrator Tina Kraus, Township Attorney Peter King and Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio.

Council Member Sparta was not present.

**PRESENTATION**

Recognition Special Police Officers

Special Police Officer Mike Sauer (hired in 1990, 35 years of service to Vernon Township)  
Special Police Officer James Vette (hired in 1986, 39 years of service to Vernon Township)  
Special Police Officer Doug Vince (hired in 1986, 39 years of service to Vernon Township)

**MAYOR'S COMMENTS**

Thanks to everyone who attended the tree lighting event.

Saturday at 4:30 pm at Veteran's Park the train will be coming in.

Tonight, we have an application for a 27-unit building. In accordance with the requirements of the Long Term Tax Exemption Law, *N.J.S.A. 40A:20-1 et seq.* (the "Exemption Law"), I have reviewed the application, proposed financial agreement and related documents (collectively, the "Application") submitted by Omega Drive Redevelopment Urban Renewal, LLC (the "Entity") for the proposed redevelopment of the property currently identified as Block 403, Lots 2 and 3 (formerly Block 141.02, Lots 2 and 3) on the Official Tax Maps of the Township of Vernon (the "Property"). The Entity proposes to redevelop the Property by constructing thereon a four-story, multi-family residential building containing a total of twenty-seven (27) residential rental units, inclusive of 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").

The Project will provide both short- and long-term economic development advantages to the Township inasmuch as it will be beneficial to the overall community; will achieve the goals and objectives of the Town Center Redevelopment Plan; will help revitalize the Property; will improve the quality of life for the community; will create 29 full-time temporary jobs, and 14 full-time permanent jobs in the Township; will serve as a catalyst for further private investment in areas surrounding the Property; and will enhance the economic development of the Township.

I believe that the Project is a desirable and beneficial improvement in the Township and that the use of the Exemption Law will assist the Township in advancing the revitalization of the redevelopment area. Therefore, I recommend that the Application be favorably considered by the Township Council, provided that all legal prerequisites have been met.

Tonight, we will have a discussion for the garbage as well.

**ITEM FOR DISCUSSION**

Garbage Incentive

**PUBLIC COMMENTS (For Current Agenda Items Only, Limited to 3 Minutes Per Person)**

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

MOVED: Higgins

SECOND: DeBenedetto

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the meeting to the public.

Vincent Speziale – is in favor of the garbage program.

Catherina Sawoszyk – is in favor of the garbage program.

Tom Cairns – is in favor of the garbage program.

Pat Seger – feels that Township should start a utility.

Craig Miebach - feels that the garbage program needs more thought.

Antonia Cherwyn Ambuter – is against the apartment building being built and has concerns.

Doreen Edwards has concerns about ordinance 25-17. She would like a copy of the property assessment that the township has done.

Andrea Stolte – has concerns about the new apartment building being built.

Kirk Stevens - has concerns about the new apartment building being built.

Heidi LeBris – is in favor of the garbage program.

Ann Larsen – questioned ordinance #25-17.

Harris Salomon – is not in favor of the new apartment building. He also is not in favor of the garbage.

Steve Dunlop – commented on the garbage program and has concerns.

Jessi Paladini – questioned ordinance #25-17.

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: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the meeting to the public.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

### **November 10, 2025 – Executive Session**

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the November 10, 2025 executive session minutes.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve the November 10, 2025 executive session minutes.

### **November 10, 2025 – Regular Meeting**

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the November 10, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve the November 10, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

**November 24, 2025 – Regular Meeting**

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the November 24, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED: DeBenedetto  
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve the November 24, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

**RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution #25-304:** Resolution of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, Awarding Bid #8-2025 DPW - Flooring Services

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-304.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-304.

**RESOLUTION #25-304**

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AWARDING BID #8-2025 DPW - FLOORING SERVICES**

**WHEREAS**, the Township public advertised and sought bids for Bid #8-2025 DPW Flooring Services Bid, in a fair and open manner, consistent with N.J.S.A. 19:44A-20.5; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township received and opened bids on November 21, 2025, at 11:00A.M., wherein the Township received one (1) bid, to wit:

LUMP SUM	TOTAL BID
George Koustas Painting and construction	\$28,000.00
Wallkill Group, Inc	\$89,000.00

;and

**WHEREAS**, the bid submitted by George Koustas Painting and Construction, 70 Beechwood Ave., West Long Branch, N.J. 07764, was determined to be the lowest responsible bidder in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-4A.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Vernon Township Council, that:

**The bid submitted by George Koustas Painting and Construction, 70 Beechwood Ave., West Long Branch, N.J. 07764, is hereby awarded Bid #8-2025 DPW Flooring Services, in the amount of \$28,000.00.**

**Resolution #25-305:** Transfer Resolution – Balance Transfers

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-305.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-305.

**RESOLUTION #25-305**

**TRANSFER RESOLUTION- BALANCE TRANSFERS**

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon Municipal Budget requires certain modifications to cover potential expenses that may occur in excess of the original budget;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that the following Transfer of Appropriations in the 2025 Municipal Budget in accordance with N.J.S.A 40A-58/59 are hereby approved.

ACCOUNT	TRANSFER OUT	TRANSFER IN
<b>FROM CURRENT FUND:</b>		
FINANCE – S&W	30,000.00	
MAINTENANCE OF PARKS – S&W	50,000.00	
ANIMAL CONTROL – S&W	10,000.00	
<b>TO: CURRENT FUND</b>		
FINANCE – O/E		5,000.00
CLERK – S&W		4,000.00
AUDIT SERVICES – O/E		18,000.00
TAX COLLECTOR – S&W		3,000.00
POLICE – O/E		20,000.00
RADIO COMMUNICATIONS – S&W		10,000.00
ROAD REPAIRS & MAINT. – S&W		30,000.00
<b>TOTAL TRANSFERS</b>	<b>90,000.00</b>	<b>90,000.00</b>

**Resolution #25-306:** Resolution Appointing Fund Commissioner

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-306.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-306.

### **RESOLUTION #25-306**

#### **RESOLUTION APPOINTING FUND COMMISSIONER**

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon (hereinafter “Local Unit”) is a member of the Statewide Insurance Fund (hereinafter “Fund”), a joint insurance fund as defined in N.J.S.A. 40A:10-36 *et seq.*; and

**WHEREAS**, the Fund’s Bylaws require participating members to appoint a Fund Commissioner;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the governing body of the Township of Vernon, that Tina Kraus, is hereby appointed as the Fund Commissioner for the Local Unit for the Fund year 2026; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Irene Mills, is hereby appointed as the Alternate Fund Commissioner for the Local Unit for the Fund Year 2026; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Local Unit’s Fund Commissioner is authorized and directed to execute all such documents as required by the Fund.

#### **Resolution #25-307: Resolution Appointing Risk Management Consultant**

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-307.

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-307.

### **RESOLUTION #25-307**

#### **RESOLUTION APPOINTING RISK MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT**

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon (hereinafter “Local Unit”) has joined the Statewide Insurance Fund (hereinafter “Fund”), a joint insurance fund as defined in N.J.S.A. 40A:10-36 *et seq.*; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bylaws require participating members to appoint a Risk Management Consultant, as those positions are defined in the Bylaws, if requested to do so by the “Fund”; and

**WHEREAS**, the Local Unit has complied with relevant law with regard to the appointment of a Risk Management Consultant; and

**WHEREAS**, the “Fund” has requested its members to appoint individuals or entities to that position.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the governing body of “Local Unit”, in the County of Sussex and State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The Township of Vernon hereby appoints World Insurance Associates LLC as its local Risk Management Consultant.

2. The Mayor of the Township of Vernon and Risk Management Consultant are hereby authorized to execute the Risk Management Consultant's Agreement for the year 2026.

**Resolution #25-308:** Resolution Authorizing Leasing of Certain Vehicles for the Department of Public Works Through Sourcewell National Cooperative #060618-EFM Through Enterprise Fleet Management Services Inc. (Quote No. 9387254)

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-308.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-308.

### **RESOLUTION #25-308**

#### **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING LEASING OF CERTAIN VEHICLES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS THROUGH SOURCEWELL NATIONAL COOPERATIVE #060618-EFM THROUGH ENTERPRISE FLEET MANAGEMENT SERVICES INC. (Quote No. 9387254)**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Sussex County, State of New Jersey as follows:

**WHEREAS**, the governing body of Vernon Township approved in Resolution 19-164 authorizing leasing of certain vehicles through Sourcewell National Cooperative #060618-EFM through Enterprise Fleet Management Services, Inc., and this is an extension of that resolution; and

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**WHEREAS**, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Public Contract Law P.L. 2011, C.139 (the "Law" or "Chapter 139" and N.J.S.A.52:34-6.2 the regulations promulgated there under in Local Finance Notice LFN 2012-10, the following purchase without competitive bids from vendor with a National Cooperative Contract is hereby approved for municipalities, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon has the need to procure certain vehicles through lease program for Township services in accord with the Local Publics Contract Law N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et. Seq., and;

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon has previously acted in accord with New Jersey public procurement statutes and regulations as promulgated by formally joining a recognized and compliant national cooperative, being the Sourcewell National Cooperative, and;

**WHEREAS**, the regulations as set forth within Local Finance Notice LFN 2012-10 have been fully complied with, and;

**WHEREAS**, the equipment and corresponding Sourcewell National Cooperative contract is #060618-EFM for Enterprise Fleet Management Services Inc.; and

**WHEREAS**, the cost savings determination as required under LFN 2012-10 is the cost of contract as there is currently no cooperative lease program in effect under the New Jersey Division of Purchase and Property; and

**WHEREAS**, the quoted cost under the Sourcewell National contract is \$67,112.40 (Quote No. 9387254); and

**WHEREAS**, that the governing body of Vernon Township pursuant to NJAC 5:30-5.5(b) (the certification of available funds), states that the Chief Finance Officer shall either certify the full maximum amount against the budget at the time the contract is awarded, or no contract amount shall be chargeable or certified until such time as the goods or services are ordered or otherwise called for prior to placing the order, and a certification of availability of funds is made by the Chief Finance Officer; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, the Business Administrator is hereby directed to effectuate the contract with Enterprise Fleet Management Services Inc. under Sourcewell contract #060618-EFM in accord with the provisions of the tenets as established within 40A:11-1 et. Seq.,

**Resolution #25-309:** Resolution Rejecting All Bids For Bid #7R-2025 – Proposed Dodecagon Gazebo at Maple Grange Park

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-309.

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-309.

**RESOLUTION #25-309**

**RESOLUTION REJECTING ALL BIDS FOR  
BID #7R-2025 – PROPOSED DODECAGON GAZEBO AT MAPLE GRANGE PARK**

**WHEREAS** the Township of Vernon received bids for Bid #7R-2025 - Proposed Dodecagon Gazebo at Maple Grange Park on December 4, 2025, at 1100 A.M.; and

**WHEREAS** the Township received three (3) bids to wit:

VENDOR	Bash Builders	In-Line Architectural Glass & Metal Inc	Moynihan Companies
BASE BID	<b>\$130,000.00</b>	<b>\$97,850.69</b>	<b>\$102,205.00</b>

; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Local Public Contracts Law at N.J.S.A.40A:11-13.2(a). allows for rejection of bids where the lowest bid substantially exceeds the cost estimates for the goods or services.

**WHEREAS**, all bids were substantially in excess of cost estimates.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, that all the bids for Bid #7R-2025 - Proposed Dodecagon Gazebo at Maple Grange Park, are hereby rejected in accord with N.J.S.A.40A:11-13.2(a)

**Resolution #25-310:** Resolution Authorizing Negotiations For Proposed Dodecagon Gazebo at Maple Grange Park Under N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5(3)

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-310.

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-310.

**RESOLUTION #25-310**

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING NEGOTIATIONS  
FOR PROPOSED DODECAGON GAZEBO AT MAPLE GRANGE PARK UNDER N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5(3)**

**WHEREAS** the Township publicly advertised and sought receipt of public bids on: October 9, 2025, and December 4, 2025, where all bids were rejected in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-13.2 for being over budgetary estimates; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey State Local Publics Contract Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5(3) allows for negotiations subsequent to two (2) rejected or non-received bids; and,

**WHEREAS** it is the desire of the Township to authorize the Qualified Purchasing Agent to conduct the negotiations process; and

**WHEREAS** the desire of the Township of Vernon remains to secure a contract with a vendor to provide for a design and installation of the proposed dodecagon gazebo at Maple Grange Park, and possessing the tenets as found within bids as advertised and received; and

**WHEREAS** relief is available through the New Jersey Local Public Contract Law N.J.S.A.40A:11-5(3) and the Township desires to avail itself of this remedy through negotiations

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, Sussex, County, that the Township's Qualified Purchasing Agent is hereby authorized to enter into negotiations with contractors under the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:11- 5(3) which correspond to available funding.

**Resolution #25-311:** Resolution Appointments to the Vernon Township Municipal Utility Authority

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to table resolution #25-311.

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to table resolution #25-311.

**INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE**

**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

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

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: Higgins

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Rizzuto  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Sparta

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #25-17.

**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 – questioned ordinance #25-17.

Harris Solamon – expressed concern with the Mayor.

Jessi Paladini – expressed concern with the Mayor.

Vincent Speziale – commented on the garbage plan.

Kirk Stevens – expressed concern with the new apartment building.

Sally Rinker – expressed concern with ordinance #25-17.

Steve Dunlop – questioned the PILOT ordinance. Mr. Dunlop commented on the Mayor's actions.

Pat Seger – commented that ordinance #25-17 will be knoll and void after December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Jackie Brovich – expressed concern with ordinance #25-17.

Kathy Sawosczyk – expressed concern with the proposed development in Vernon.

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.

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member DeBenedetto regrets voting for the year's budget, citing grief over her father's sudden death and financial pressure from a \$25 daily fine as factors that led her to overlook a tax increase she would have opposed. On the development pilot project, she personally hates new growth, having moved to Vernon for its rural charm, farms, and wildlife, but voted yes because it would bring the town an extra \$3.8 million in revenue, benefiting residents despite added students. She stresses the challenge of voting for the town's best interests over personal preferences and apologizes to disappointed constituents.

Council Member Buccieri appreciated everyone reaching out with their concerns. We have met with Matt Jessup several times and we learned a lot about PILOT programs. We live here too and we care about our community and we want to make the best decisions. Council Member Buccieri explained that the \$3.8 million dollars will stabilize the taxes. As former Board of Education members we questioned the school children. We ask questions and at the end of the day, we are making the decisions that are best for the town.

Council Member Higgins appreciates the participation. There were a lot of statements made about the ninety-nine apartments and this has nothing to do with that. The Land Use Board did their due diligent for this building. This will financially improve the town. This comes down to the school board. We have a low student teacher ratio in the school. This is one of the ways the Council can help the tax base in the town. Council Member Higgins recommend voluntarily stopping all of the Facebook posts in this town particulaly the Mayor. Council Member Higgins thanked Council Members Buccieri and DeBenedetto for their service to the town.

## **COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS**

Council President Rizzuto had no comments.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:59 pm Council Member DeBenedetto made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member Buccieri.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR  
Municipal Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
William Higgins  
Council President

Minutes approved: January 15, 2026