

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
APRIL 14, 2025 7:00 PM**

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on April 14, 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, William Higgins, Bradley Sparta and Council President Patrick Rizzuto. Also present were Mayor Anthony Rossi, Business Administrator Tina Krause, CFO Donelle Bright, Township Attorney Peter King and Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio.

Council Member DeBenedetto was not present.

**PROCLAMATION**

Child Abuse Prevention Month

**PRESENTATION**

State of the Township (See Attachment)

Council President Rizzuto introduced County Commissioner Alan Henderson.

**DISCUSSION ITEM**

2025 Municipal Budget

**MAYOR COMMENTS**

Mayor Rossi explained that in this year's budget, we are forced to deal with and recognize not only this year's inflationary costs, but also the inflationary costs of 2022 through 2024, which include the following:

1. Over 21% in Health Insurance expenses.
2. Over 26% in Liability Insurance increases.
3. Over 28% in Worker's Compensation Insurance.
4. Over 37% in Road Repairs/Maintenance Other Expenses/Operations.
5. Over 30% in Buildings and Grounds Other Expenses/Operations.
6. Over 89% in Recycling Operations/Other Expenses for recycling disposal.
7. Over 31% in Police Operations/Other Expenses for service contracts.
8. Over 27% for Fleet Maintenance Other Expenses for maintaining the Township fleet and emergency service vehicles.
9. Over 9% increase in budgeted utilities expenses.
10. Over 16% in Social Security expenses.
11. Over 38% in Pension obligations for public employees.
12. Over 28% for Pension obligations for police employees.
13. Over 11% in capital expenditure increases for cash capital expenses on short-lived capital items.

**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: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Steve Dunlop – expressed concern with resolution #25-111 and resolution #25-113. Mr. Dunlop commented on the size of the township.

Heidi Le Bris – thanked the Mayor and Council for all of their hard work.

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.

### **REVIEW OF BILLS LIST**

The Council reviewed the bills list.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

#### **March 24, 2025 – Executive Session**

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the March 24, 2025 executive session meeting minutes with corrections.

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: Sparta

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion carries to approve March 24, 2025 executive session meeting minutes.

#### **March 24, 2025 – Regular Meeting**

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the March 24, 2025 regular meeting minutes with corrections.

MOVED: Sparta  
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion carries to approve March 24, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

**Resolution #25-112:** Amended Resolution Authorizing a Grant Application to the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs for the FY 2025 Local Recreation Improvements Grant Program

**Resolution #25-114:** Resolution of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, Awarding Refreshments Vendor at the Maple Grange Park Snack Stand Concession to “The Scoop”

**Resolution #25-115:** Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran Block 557 Lot 5 (Apodaca)

**Resolution #25-116:** Refund Overpayment (Block 464 Lot 2 – Hohn)

**Resolution #25-117:** Refund Overpayment (Block 526 Lot 381 – Bhatia)

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

MOVED: Sparta  
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: DeBenedetto

Motion carries to approve the consent.

**RESOLUTION #25-112**

**AMENDED RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS FOR THE FY 2025 LOCAL RECREATION  
IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM**

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon desires to apply for and obtain a grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs for approximately \$75,000 to carry out a project to construct a Community Gazebo in an already developed recreational facility to meet the needs of the community members who are looking for more passive recreation, art and entertainment; and to enable the greatest participation and use of the park offering a wider range of activities, workshops and educational opportunities;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, authorize the application for such a grant; and,

2) recognizes and accepts that the Department may offer a lesser or greater amount and therefore, upon receipt of the grant agreement from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, does further authorize the execution of any such grant agreement; and also, upon receipt of the fully executed agreement from the Department, does further authorize the expenditure of funds pursuant to the terms of the agreement between The Township of Vernon and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.

***Be it further RESOLVED***, that the persons whose names, titles, and signatures appear below are authorized to sign the application, and that they or their successors in said titles are authorized to sign the agreement, and any other documents necessary in connection therewith:

**RESOLUTION #25-114**

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW  
JERSEY, AWARDING REFRESHMENTS VENDOR AT THE MAPLE GRANGE PARK SNACK  
STAND CONCESSION  
TO “THE SCOOP”**

**WHEREAS**, a proposal was submitted to the Township by The Scoop for a refreshments vendor at the Maple Grange Park snack stand for the 2025 summer season beginning May1, 2025 and ending on Labor Day and

**WHEREAS** the Township received one (1) proposal for service and it falls within the parameters of quote procurement;

**WHEREAS** the Township Recreation Director has recommended The Scoop, 524 Old Homestead Dr., Highland Lakes, NJ 07422, as the most advantageous to the Township based upon Price and offered Community Services to be provided; and

**WHEREAS**, The Scoop has proposed paying the Township of Vernon \$200.00 per month as a concession fee to operate as refreshments vendor at the Maple Grange Park snack stand, as acceptable to the Township.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Vernon Township Council hereby approves concession procurement to The Scoop, 524 Old Homestead Dr., Highland Lakes, NJ 07422, in the amount of concession fee payable to the Township of Vernon in the amount of \$200.00 per month for the 2025 summer season ending on Labor Day.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**; the Township Clerk shall send a certified copy of this resolution to The Scoop.

**RESOLUTION #25-115**

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN  
Block 557 Lot 5 (Apodaca)**

**WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
awarded Mara Apodaca a 100% permanent and totally disabled veteran: and,

**WHEREAS**, the law exempts said property from taxation.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Tax Collector to refund 2024 property tax in the amount of \$4,750.51 to Mara Apodaca.

**FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED**, that a certified copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Township Tax Collector.

**RESOLUTION #25-116**

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT  
(Block 464 Lot 2 – Kohn)**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to the

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Kohn	464	2	\$1764.06
		<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1764.06</b>

representing

refund for overpayment of 4<sup>th</sup> qtr. 2024 property taxes for Block 464 Lot 2.

**RESOLUTION #25-117**

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT  
(Block 526 Lot 381 – Bhatia)**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Aankur Bhatia in the amount of \$1422.23 representing refund for overpayment of 4<sup>th</sup> qtr. 2024 property taxes for Block 526 Lot 381.

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Bhatia	526	381	\$1422.23
		TOTAL:	\$1422.23

**RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution #25-111:** Appointing of Vernon Township Acting Zoning Officer

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-111.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-111.

**RESOLUTION #25-111**

**APPOINTMENT OF VERNON TOWNSHIP ACTING ZONING OFFICER**

**WHEREAS**, the Township is in need of a Zoning Officer, Mindy Martin, has been serving as the Acting Zoning Officer since March 17, 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, Mindy Martin is in the process of obtaining her zoning administration and enforcement certification to become Zoning Officer.

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

- 1. Mindy Martin is hereby appointed Acting Zoning Officer of Vernon Township as of March 17, 2025.
- 2. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption according to law.

**Resolution #25-113:** Side Bar Agreement Between the Township of Vernon and U.A.W. Local No. 2326

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-113.

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Council President Rizzuto made a motion to table resolution #25-113. Seconded By Council Member Buccieri.

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion carried to table resolution #25-113.

**INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE**

**Ordinance #25-05:** An Ordinance Amending Chapter 374 of the Township Code Entitled “Nuisances, Public Health” to Prohibit Intrusive Outdoor Lighting

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #25-05.

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: Higgins

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #25-05.

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

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

MOVED: Buccieri  
SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the floor to the public.

Karina Espinosa – expressed concern with water runoff on her property.

Steve Dunlop – expressed concern with resolution #25-113 and resolution #25-114.

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

MOVED: Higgins  
SECOND: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the floor to public comments.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member Higgins commented that the township does their best to keep taxes down after three years in a row with a zero percent increase. Council Member Higgins feels that the School Board is the problem with the high taxes. He recommends that the residents get involved with the School Board and complain to them at their meetings in reference to the high taxes.

Council Member Sparta feels that we can replenish our surplus with the back taxes from Legends. Council Member Sparta would like the Council to take action against Legends to get the back taxes paid. He would like to see a resolution on the May 12, 2025 agenda if nothing is done by the end of April.  
Council Member Buccieri echoes Council Members Higgins and Sparta comments tonight. She wishes everyone a nice Easter.

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS**

Council President Rizzuto would also like to see the progress on the Legends property by the time period that was given. He feels that if this is not done within the time period given, the Council will have to move in a different direction with the property.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:24 pm Council Member Higgins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member Sparta.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR  
Municipal Clerk

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Patrick Rizzuto  
Council President

Minutes approved: April 28, 2025