

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 20, 2026 7:00 PM**

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on April 20, 2026 in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Council Vice President Ooms presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided to the public and the press on January 22, 2026, 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 Vice President Ooms led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

ROLL CALL

Present were Council Members, Carl Contino, Sandra Ooms, Patrick Rizzuto, Bradley Sparta and Council President William Higgins. Also present were Mayor Anthony Rossi, Business Administrator Tina Kraus, CFO Patricia Reiche, Township Attorney Peter King and Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio.

PRESENTATION

Animal Control Officer Appreciation Week

PROCLAMATION

Designation of April as Autism Month

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Resolution #26-165: Resolution Requiring the Mayor to Submit a 2026 Employee Census Report to the Council

Council Member Contino made a motion to approved resolution #26-165 as amended. Seconded by Council Member Ooms.

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved resolution #26-165 as amended.

RESOLUTION #26-165

RESOLUTION REQUIRING THE MAYOR TO SUBMIT A 2026 EMPLOYEE CENSUS REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

WHEREAS; the Township Council is charged with the responsibility to the taxpayers of Vernon to make prudent decisions regarding the use of taxpayer funds, and

WHEREAS; the Township Council recognizes that receiving accurate and current information is necessary to carry out the duties of their elected position, and

WHEREAS; the Township Council has requested an employee census report from Mayor Anthony Rossi by email and at several Council meetings, and

WHEREAS; a copy of an excel spreadsheet containing examples of the requested employee information, created by a former Vernon administration, was supplied to him, and

WHEREAS; Mayor Anthony Rossi offered information that was general in nature, non- specific, insufficient and incomplete, and

WHEREAS; the Vernon Council is given the authority under our Faulkner Act form of government, N.J.S.A 40:69A-36 Legislative Power which grants the Council the authority to conduct legislative inquiry or investigation, and

WHEREAS; the code of Vernon Township, Chapter 5. Administration of Government, 5-4. Township Council, General powers and duties B (3), states, Any Council member may at any time require a report on any aspect of the government of the Township by making a written request to the Mayor.

WHEREAS; the list will be sorted by department.

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

1. Mayor Anthony Rossi prepares and delivers a current 2026 Employee Census Report in an Excel spreadsheet in the same manner and format with all the same categories of information for every employee of the Township as shown in the attached example (Schedule A).
2. The report will indicate the department each employee works in, if they are full time, part time, or temporary part time in addition to the other listed categories in Schedule A and the report shall be delivered to the Council at the next regularly scheduled Council meeting May 11, 2026.
3. The report will be updated monthly to be current and be submitted to the Council at each first Council meeting of the month after May 11, 2026.
4. The list will be sorted by department.

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

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

MOVED: Rizzuto

SECOND: Contino

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the meeting for public comment.

Sally Rinker – commented on the number of employees the Township has.

Doreen Edwards – commented on the state of the Council and the Mayor.

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

MOVED: Contino

SECOND: Rizzuto

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the meeting to the public.

REVIEW OF BILLS LIST

The Council reviewed the bills list.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to approve the March 23, 2026 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED: Contino
SECOND: Rizzuto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved the March 23, 2026 regular meeting minutes.

March 30, 2026 – Special Meeting

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to approve the March 30, 2026 special meeting minutes.

MOVED: Rizzuto
SECOND: Contino

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved the March 30, 2026 special meeting minutes.

March 30, 2026 – Budget Workshop Meeting

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to approve the March 30, 2026 budget workshop meeting minutes.

MOVED: Contino
SECOND: Rizzuto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved the March 30, 2026 budget workshop meeting minutes.

April 6, 2026 – Budget Workshop Meeting

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to approve the April 6, 2026 budget workshop meeting minutes.

MOVED: Rizzuto
SECOND: Contino

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved the April 6, 2026 budget workshop meeting minutes.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution #26-151: Refund for Carry Permit Municipal Fee, Houseward

Resolution #26-152: Refund for Carry Permit Municipal Fee, Vellis

Resolution #26-153: Approving a Charitable Solicitor’s Permit: Vernon Emergency Medical Services Inc.

Resolution #26-154: Refund Overpayment (Block 11 Lot 5 – Marotta)

Resolution #26-155: Approving a Solicitor Permit – RJW Exteriors

Resolution #26-156: Refund for Carry Permit Municipal Fee, DeFazio

Resolution #26-157: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 203 Lot 1)

Resolution #26-158: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 445 Lot 6)

Resolution #26-159: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 484 Lot 66)

Resolution #26-160: (Block 484 Lot 66) Cancelling Taxes for Total Disabled Veteran

Resolution #26-161: Refund Overpayment Due to State Tax Court Judgement (Choi) Block 535 Lot 27

Resolution #26-162: Refund Overpayment Due to State Tax Court Judgement (Choi) Block 535 Lot 27

Resolution #26-163: Refund Overpayment Due to State Tax Court Judgement (Choi) Block 535 Lot 27

Resolution #26-164: Refund for Carry Permit Municipal Fee, Roman

Resolution #26-167: Approving a Charitable Solicitor’s Permit: McAfee Volunteer Fire Department

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

MOVED: Contino

SECOND: Rizzuto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved the consent agenda.

RESOLUTION #26-151

REFUND FOR CARRY PERMIT MUNICIPAL FEE, HOUSEWARD

WHEREAS, mayor and township council of the township of Vernon have adopted ordinance 26-04 dated 2/9/2026 allowing the refund of the municipal fee portion of the conceal carry application;

WHEREAS, to ease the financial burden, the Township of Vernon will offer a refund of \$150 for the municipal fee to Andrew Houseward.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Township of Vernon Finance Department to refund the municipal portion of the conceal carry application fee in the amount of \$150 to Andrew Houseward.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Township Finance Department.

RESOLUTION #26-152

REFUND FOR CARRY PERMIT MUNICIPAL FEE, Vellis

WHEREAS, mayor and township council of the township of Vernon have adopted ordinance 26-04 dated 2/9/2026 allowing the refund of the municipal fee portion of the conceal carry application;

WHEREAS, to ease the financial burden, the Township of Vernon will offer a refund of \$150 for the municipal fee to Ryan Vellis.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Township of Vernon Finance Department to refund the municipal portion of the conceal carry application fee in the amount of \$150 to Ryan Vellis.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Township Finance Department.

RESOLUTION #26-153

APPROVING A CHARITABLE SOLICITOR'S PERMIT: VERNON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES INC.

WHEREAS, Vernon Emergency Medical Services Inc. has made application for a Charitable Roadside Solicitor's Permit for the purposes of soliciting funds on May 30th and 31st, 2026; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with Ordinance 18-12, the Vernon Township Police Department has reviewed the necessary application found that all documentation is in order.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that approval be granted for a Charitable Roadside Solicitor's Permit for Vernon Emergency Medical Services Inc., Route 94 and Route 515; subject to the approval of the County of Sussex and State of New Jersey as needed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township Clerk is hereby authorized to issue a Charitable Roadside Solicitor's Permit to the aforesaid applicant in accordance with Chapter 428 of the Code of the Township of Vernon upon receipt of the approval from the County of Sussex.

RESOLUTION #26-154

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT
(Block 11 Lot 5 – Marotta)**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to in the amount of \$5387.03 representing refund for overpayment for 3rd & 4th qtrs. 2025 property taxes for Block 11 Lot 5.

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Marotta	11	5- 3rd Qtr.	\$2633.20
Marotta	11	5- 4th Qtr.	\$2753.83
		TOTAL:	\$5387.03

RESOLUTION #26-155

APPROVING A SOLICITOR PERMIT – RJW EXTERIORS

WHEREAS, Jonas Rivas-Rivera has made an application for a Solicitor Permit for the purpose of Home Improvement Services; and

WHEREAS, upon receipt of the application for a Solicitor Permit, by Jonas Rivas-Rivera of RJW Exteriors the Vernon Township Police Department investigated the applicant’s moral character and found it to be satisfactory and in good order for the protection of the public good; and the necessary application has been filed and all documentation is in order;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that approval be granted for a Solicitor Permit for Jonas Rivas-Rivera.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township Clerk is hereby authorized to issue a Solicitor’s Permit to the aforesaid applicant in accordance with Chapter 428 of the Code of the Township of Vernon.

RESOLUTION #26-156

REFUND FOR CARRY PERMIT MUNICIPAL FEE, DeFAZIO

WHEREAS, mayor and township council of the township of Vernon have adopted ordinance 26-04 dated 2/9/2026 allowing the refund of the municipal fee portion of the conceal carry application;

WHEREAS, to ease the financial burden, the Township of Vernon will offer a refund of \$150 for the municipal fee to Ralph DeFazio.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Township of Vernon Finance Department to refund the municipal portion of the conceal carry application fee in the amount of \$150 to Ralph DeFazio.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Township Finance Department.

RESOLUTION #26-157

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 203 Lot 1)**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS awarded Ryan Padilla 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 2026 property tax in the amount of \$4,773.12 to Ryan Padilla.

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

RESOLUTION #26-158

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 445 Lot 6)**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS awarded Derek Manning 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 2026 property tax in the amount of \$1,611.61 to Derek Manning.

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

RESOLUTION #26-159

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 484 Lot 66)**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS awarded Emmett McDowell 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 2026 property tax in the amount of \$2,411.98 to Emmett McDowell.

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

RESOLUTION #26-160

**(Block 484 Lot 66)
CANCELLING TAXES FOR TOTAL DISABLED VETERAN**

WHEREAS THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS Awarded Emmett McDowell 100% permanent and total disabled veteran; and

WHEREAS, as of said date the law exempts said property from taxation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon authorizes the Tax Collector to cancel the taxes for 2026 in the amount of \$3,867.72.

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

RESOLUTION #26-161

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT DUE TO STATE TAX COURT JUDGMENT
(Choi) Block 535 Lot 27**

WHEREAS, a Tax Court Judgment has been favorably awarded for the year 2021: and,

WHEREAS, such Judgment has resulted in an overpayment of 2021 property taxes for Block 535 Lot 27 also known as 1567 Rt. 565, Vernon, New Jersey.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Township of Vernon, to authorize the Tax Collector to refund the 2021 overpayment in the amount of \$1,445.78 to Kyungkun Choi

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Township Treasurer and Tax Collector.

RESOLUTION #26-162

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT DUE TO STATE TAX COURT JUDGMENT
(Choi) Block 535 Lot 27**

WHEREAS, a Tax Court Judgment has been favorably awarded for the year 2022: and,

WHEREAS, such Judgment has resulted in an overpayment of 2022 property taxes for Block 535 Lot 27 also known as 1567 Rt. 565, Vernon, New Jersey.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Township of Vernon, to authorize the Tax Collector to refund the 2022 overpayment in the amount of \$1,415.14 to Kyungkun Choi

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Township Treasurer and Tax Collector.

RESOLUTION #26-163

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT DUE TO STATE TAX COURT JUDGMENT
(Choi) Block 535 Lot 27**

WHEREAS, a Tax Court Judgment has been favorably awarded for the year 2023: and,

WHEREAS, such Judgment has resulted in an overpayment of 2023 property taxes for Block 535 Lot 27 also known as 1567 Rt. 565, Vernon, New Jersey.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Township of Vernon, to authorize the Tax Collector to refund the 2023 overpayment in the amount of \$1,221.30 to Kyungkun Choi

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Township Treasurer and Tax Collector.

RESOLUTION #26-164

REFUND FOR CARRY PERMIT MUNICIPAL FEE, ROMAN

WHEREAS, mayor and township council of the township of Vernon have adopted ordinance 26-04 dated 2/9/2026 allowing the refund of the municipal fee portion of the conceal carry application;

WHEREAS, to ease the financial burden, the Township of Vernon will offer a refund of \$150 for the municipal fee to William Roman.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Township of Vernon Finance Department to refund the municipal portion of the conceal carry application fee in the amount of \$150 to William Roman.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Township Finance Department.

RESOLUTION #26-167

APPROVING A CHARITABLE SOLICITOR’S PERMIT: McAfee Volunteer Fire Department

WHEREAS, McAfee Volunteer Fire Department has made application for a Charitable Roadside Solicitor’s Permit for the purposes of soliciting funds on May 2-3, May 16-17, July 25-26, October 17-18, 2026 from 7am-4pm; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with Ordinance 18-12, the Vernon Township Police Department has reviewed the necessary application found that all documentation is in order.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that approval be granted for a Charitable Roadside Solicitor’s Permit for McAfee Volunteer Fire Department, subject to the approval of the County of Sussex and State of New Jersey as needed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township Clerk is hereby authorized to issue a Charitable Roadside Solicitor’s Permit to the aforesaid applicant in accordance with Chapter 428 of the Code of the Township of Vernon upon receipt of the approval from the County of Sussex.

RESOLUTION

Resolution #26-150: Resolution of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, Awarding Bid # 26-02 Generator Maintenance and Repair Services

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to approve resolution #26-150.

MOVED: Contino
SECOND: Rizzuto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved resolution #26-150.

RESOLUTION #26-150

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AWARDED BID # 26-02 GENERATOR MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR SERVICES

WHEREAS, the Township public advertised and sought bids for Bid#26-02 Generator Maintenance and Repair Services, 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 March 17, 2026, wherein the Township received two (2) bids wherein Kraft Power was determined to be the lowest responsible bidder in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-4A, to wit:

BASE BID	Kraft Power
LAKE CONWAY	
Year 1	\$875.00

Year 2	\$900.00
Sub Total	\$1,775.00
ANIMAL CONTROL	
Year 1	\$860.00
Year 2	\$885.00
Sub Total	\$1,745.00
DPW	
Year 1	\$900.00
Year 2	\$925.00
Sub Total	\$1,825.00
MUNICIPAL BLDG	
Year 1	\$1,075.00
Year 2	\$1,100.00
Sub Total	\$2,175.00
LAKE PANORAMA	
Year 1	\$860.00
Year 2	\$885.00
Sub Total	\$1,745.00
MONDOMIN	
Year 1	\$860.00
Year 2	\$885.00
Sub Total	\$1,745.00
MUA lift stations	
LA Touquet	
Year 1	\$860.00
Year 2	\$885.00
Sub Total	\$1,745.00
Stonehill	
Year 1	\$860.00
Year 2	\$885.00
Sub Total	\$1,745.00
Brandywine	
Year 1	\$860.00
Year 2	\$885.00
Sub Total	\$1,745.00
Steamboat	
Year 1	\$860.00
Year 2	\$885.00
Sub Total	\$1,745.00
Black creek	
Year 1	\$875.00
Year 2	\$900.00
Sub Total	\$1,775.00
PUMP STATIONS	
PUMP STATION 1	
Year 1	\$900.00
Year 2	\$925.00
Sub Total	\$1,825.00
PUMP STATION 2	
Year 1	\$900.00
Year 2	\$925.00
Sub Total	\$1,825.00
PUMP STATION 3	
Year 1	\$900.00
Year 2	\$925.00
Sub Total	\$1,825.00
TOTAL	
Year 1	\$12,445.00
Year 2	\$12,795.00
Sub Total	\$25,240.00

;and

WHEREAS, the bid submitted by Kraft Power, 241 West Parkway, Pompton Plains, N.J. 07444 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 Kraft Power, 241 West Parkway, Pompton Plains, N.J. 07444, is hereby awarded in the amounts as bid for a two (2) year contract, for the bid known as Bid# 26-02 Generator Maintenance and Repair Services.

The Mayor is hereby authorized to execute all contracts and agreements in furtherance of Bid#26-02.

Extensions of contract are allowable in accordance with N.J.S.A 40A:11-15.

MAYOR COMMENTS

Council President Higgins and other Members of the Council:

During the past few short months, Chief Financial Patricia Reiche, Business Administrator Tina Kraus and I, have been meeting with municipal department heads and reviewing/discussing their budget related departmental requirements/plans for 2026. The entire staff started their 2026 budget development process with the direction that they look for cost savings opportunities in every departmental line item.

The municipal budget development process and the related statutory budget deadlines are governed and directed by the New Jersey Division of Local Government Services, which has the statutory responsibility for developing and implementing State of New Jersey rules and regulations on the fiscal operations, the fiscal reporting and overseeing the fiscal condition of all New Jersey municipalities.

The following are the four key statutory budget deadlines and processes that the New Jersey Division of Local Government Services require all municipalities to meet and follow:

1. THE STATUTORY DEADLINE AND PROCESS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET - - The Mayor is required to provide one public hearing, which must take place during the month of November, where the department heads review their budget requests with the Mayor. That statutory requirement was met on *November 24, 2025*.
2. THE STATUTORY DEADLINE FOR THE MAYOR TO PROVIDE THE COUNCIL A COPY OF THE PROPOSED MUNICIPAL BUDGET - - The Mayor is required to officially submit the proposed municipal budget to the Council for review *not later than the first meeting after February 27* the proposed 2026 Municipal Budget was provided to the Council on March 23, 2026, this timeline was late at no fault of the Mayor. Due to onboarding of the new CFO, we were justified for being late as per our auditors. Also note the mayor cannot deliver the budget without the CFO and the auditors sign off
3. THE STATUTORY DEADLINE FOR THE COUNCIL TO INTRODUCE THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET AT A PUBLIC COUNCIL MEETING - - The Council is required to introduce the municipal budget at a public Council meeting *not later than the first meeting after March 31 (April 20, 2026)*.
4. THE STATUTORY DEADLINE FOR THE COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET AT A PUBLIC COUNCIL MEETING - - The Council is required to approve the municipal budget at a public Council meeting *not later than the first meeting after April 30 (May 18, 2026)*.

This budget, as it is proposed, has been developed with a focus on the achievement of five key goals. These five key goals are:

1. To maintain the level of services that our town is required to provide, or has committed to providing, while at the same time looking for areas where we can operate in a more effective and efficient way;
2. To continue our ongoing road improvement program, and to replace, in an efficient and financially responsible manner, town vehicles and equipment that are beyond their useful lives;
3. To continue to pay down our debt and create a pay-as-you-go system for short-lived capital expenses;
4. To continue to make repairs and improvements to township properties so as to avoid even larger improvement costs in the future; and ...
5. To ensure *Vernon stays Business Friendly*, encouraging businesses to establish themselves in Vernon Township, working with developers to meet needs of residents, and increase the commercial ratable base.

The final budget that the Administration presented to the Council in 2024 resulted in a zero percent increase in municipal taxes. The Township was able to achieve this objective by: using over \$539k from the reserve from sale of property and \$1.75mil from the Municipal Fund Balance - - which is the town's savings account where it maintains funds to cover the costs of those unforeseen, unknown and unknowable expenses that pop up from time to time; and ...

While the use of fund balance that the town has generated over time was critical to the Mayor and Council's achievement of the objective of delivering a zero percent increase in the municipal portion of the taxes for 2024, it also masked the average 2% increase that the town had to pay for the basic operations of municipal government. This was after the fund balance used in 2022 masked the nearly 6% increase in operations and 2023 masking the 3% increase in operations.

The Township has anticipated \$1.95 mil in fund balance use this year, which still masks the increases in costs that must be considered in the 2026 budget. The Township has had to absorb the increased costs in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 which is reflected in its use and depletion of fund balance has added to the 2026 budget increase.

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 from 2023 through 2026, while in 2022, 2023- and 2024-zero percent increase is causing which include the following:

1. Over 21% in Health Insurance expenses. Total 26% in Health Insurance expenses. Could have been doubled if we hadn't gotten out of the state plan
2. Over 7% Liability Insurance increase, Total 20%
3. Over 2.5% in Worker's Compensation Insurance. Total 15%
4. Over 2.5% in Road Repairs/Maintenance Other Expenses/Operations. Total 47%
5. Over 9% in Buildings and Grounds Other Expenses/Operations. Total 40%
6. Over 22% in Recycling Operations/Other Expenses for recycling disposal. Total 60%
7. Over 6% in Police Operations/Other Expenses for service contracts. Total 35%
8. Over 6.5% for Fleet Maintenance Other Expenses for maintaining the Township fleet and emergency service vehicles. Total 38%
9. Over 13% increase in budgeted utilities expenses. Total 15%
10. Over 15% in Social Security expenses. Total 33%
11. 0% in Pension obligations for public employees. Total 10%
12. Over 4% for Pension obligations for police employees. Total 10%

WHERE AND HOW THE MAJORITY OF 2026 MUNICIPAL TAX DOLLARS WILL BE SPENT

Just six major categories account for almost 85% - - of the total dollars in this year's budget. Those seven categories are:

1. The category that covers the cost of our Police Department and Emergency Volunteer Services Budgets, and includes our *Law Enforcement Officer's salaries and wages*; the *Police Department's administrative office and equipment supplies*; the *Radio Dispatch Services for our Police Department, plus our Volunteer Fire and Ambulance services and LOSAP*; and our town's *Animal Control* needs. At \$6.3mil this category consumes 18.25% of the total budget.
2. The category that covers our town's Debt Payments, and the town's Cash Payments for Required Capital Projects. At \$4.6mil, this category consumes 13.5% of the total budget.
3. The category that covers our payments for our Employees' Health Insurance, Unemployment Insurance, Workers Compensation Insurance, and Other Insurance. At \$4.8mil, this category consumes 14% of the total budget.
4. The category that covers our payments for Road Repairs & Maintenance, our Building & Grounds and Parks Maintenance, and our Recycling Center & Fleet Management. At \$3.5mil this category consumes 10.25% of the total budget.
5. The Reserve for Uncollected Taxes. This category covers the funds that sound accounting practices require us to add to our budget to cover the dollar amount of taxes we are not likely to collect during the given budget year. Based on our 2025 tax collection rate of 97.03%, the dollar amount that we are required to include in this year's budget is \$2.7mil, or 8% of the total budget.
6. The category that covers our Statutory Obligations, such as Social Security, Retirements & Defined Contribution Payments, plus Reimbursements that the Town is required by law to pay to Private Lake and other Private Communities under the Municipal Services Act, better known as the Kelly Bill. At \$3.3mil this category consumes 9.75% of the total budget.

I also want to note that our 100% disabled veterans in Vernon have reached gone from 82 in 2024 to 117 in 2025 which is a tax loss on just under \$1.1 million dollars that the municipality refunds back, while the county and school keep their portion.

This budget should be a reminder to all as to why the 2 PILOT programs we did was necessary and will impose a positive impact towards future budgets.

Another means of revenue is cannabis. I have expedited the cannabis operations from 9 pods to 18 pods, which have just begun producing cannabis according to Sussex cultivation. The township has been receiving the 2% tax revenue, which was just under \$100k for 2025, which has almost tripled from 2024. This is before the cultivation portion started.

6. The new owner of Legends bought the tax liens of 190 properties for \$277k. We received the tax payments for those 190 properties which are current today. The back taxes on Legends are currently under review by the administration, attorneys, with full cooperation from the new owners. This decade-old tax deficit will be coming to an end in the next couple of months, and I want to thank the residents of this town for your patience, as well as the council's willingness to resolve this quickly as well.

I will ask the council to launch the garbage initiative soon so we can bring in more revenue, there is a lot of money to be made with garbage

Finally

In developing this year's municipal budget, I have chosen to use \$1.95 mil from the Municipal Fund Balance---solely in my attempt to reduce the 2026 municipal portion of taxes to the smallest increase possible, while still being responsible to the tax payers and ensuring they are not met with a much larger increase in future years. This year's budget, as it is proposed, totals \$34,603,492.45, a 6% increase over last year's budget. The net result is that municipal taxes are anticipated with an average increase of \$9/month on the average home.

I am not pleased that the municipality's needs have required me to present a budget that includes a tax increase. However, this proposal is the result of a thorough and disciplined process. My administration has met with every department head, reviewed each line item in detail, and evaluated all anticipated increases. Adjustments have been made where appropriate, and every effort has been taken to ensure that any increase reflected in this budget is **fully justified, necessary, and responsible**.

This budget is built on addressing the Township's **actual operational needs**, not discretionary or unnecessary spending.

I also have serious concerns about the consequences of excessive cuts. Reducing the budget beyond what is operationally sound increases the likelihood of **emergency appropriations, special meetings, and reactive decision-making**—all of which undermine fiscal stability and long-term planning.

That is precisely why we budget: to responsibly plan not only for known expenses, but also for **foreseeable and unavoidable contingencies**.

I urge the Council to understand and to recognize that maintaining stability today prevents far greater financial and operational challenges tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION OF 2026 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Resolution #26-166: Introduction of the 2026 Budget

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to approve resolution #26-166 as amended.

MOVED: Rizzuto

SECOND: Ooms

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins

NAYES: Contino

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved resolution #26-166.

RESOLUTION #26-166

INTRODUCTION OF 2026 BUDGET

BE IT RESOLVED that the Local Municipal budget of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, New Jersey for the fiscal year 2026 be approved by the Governing Body of the Township of Vernon, and the Clerk is hereby instructed to advertise on Vernon Township's website on April 27, 2026 and that a final public hearing before passage will be held on May 28, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. at the Municipal Building 21 Church Street, Vernon and via Zoom Webinar, that said budget shall authorize total general appropriations of \$34,603,492.45 and the anticipated revenues of \$13,285,441.12 leaving an amount to be raised by taxes for municipal purposes of \$21,318,051.33.

14. INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Ordinance #26-08: An Ordinance of the Township of Vernon, In the County of Sussex, New Jersey Adopting a Redevelopment Plan for Block 405, Lot 8 on the Official Tax Maps of the Township

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #26-08.

MOVED: Contino

SECOND: Rizzuto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #26-08.

Ordinance #26-09: An Ordinance Amending Chapter 330 (Land Use and Development Regulation), Article XI (Zoning), Section 330-160 (Schedule of Permitted, Conditional and Accessory Uses and Structures) of the Revised General Ordinances of the Township of Vernon to Permit Food Trucks as an Accessory Use to Wineries, Breweries and Distilleries in Accordance with New Jersey Law

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #26-09.

MOVED: Contino
SECOND: Rizzuto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #26-09.

Ordinance #26-10: An Ordinance Amending the Vernon Township Administrative Code Chapter 350 Long Term Rentals, Chapter 263 Fire Prevention, Chapter 167 Business Insurance Registration, Chapter 476 Short Term Rentals

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #26-10.

MOVED: Rizzuto
SECOND: Ooms

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #26-10.

15. PUBLIC HEARING/ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE

Ordinance #26-07: An Ordinance of the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey Amending the McAfee Village Commercial Resort Development Plan

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to open the floor for public hearing on ordinance #26-07.

MOVED: Contino
SECOND: Rizzuto

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the floor to the public for public hearing of ordinance #26-07.

Seeing no members of the public wishing to come forward, Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to close the public hearing on ordinance #26-07.

MOVED: Rizzuto
SECOND: Contino

All members were in favor

Motion carries to close the floor to the public for public hearing of ordinance #26-07.

Vice President Ooms asked for a motion to adopt ordinance #26-07.

MOVED: Contino
SECOND: Rizzuto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to adopt ordinance #26-07.

ORDINANCE #26-07

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, NEW JERSEY AMENDING THE MCAFEE VILLAGE COMMERCIAL RESORT REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon (the “**Township**”) is a political subdivision of the State of New Jersey (the “**State**”), located in the County of Sussex (the “**County**”); and

WHEREAS, the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.* as amended and supplemented (the “**Redevelopment Law**”), provides municipalities with broad powers to ameliorate blighted areas, including the powers to investigate whether a property constitutes an “area in need of redevelopment”, to prepare and adopt a redevelopment plan for such area, to contract with redevelopers for the planning, replanning, construction or undertaking of any project or redevelopment work, and arrange by contract for the provision of professional services for the carrying out of redevelopment projects; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the criteria set forth in the Redevelopment Law, the Township identified and designated various property within the McAfee Village commercial resort area, including the properties then-identified as Block 231.01, Lot 1 on the tax map of the Township, commonly known as the Legends Resort, as an “area in need of redevelopment” (the “**Redevelopment Area**”) and adopted Ordinance No. 08-03 codifying the redevelopment plan for the Redevelopment Area, entitled, “McAfee Village Commercial Resort Redevelopment Plan” as the same may be amended and supplemented from time to time (the “**Original Redevelopment Plan**”); and

WHEREAS, the Township has determined to act as the “redevelopment entity” for the Redevelopment Area; and

WHEREAS, the Township desires to amend the Original Redevelopment Plan to add media studio and production company as a permitted use in the McAfee Village Commercial Resort Zoning District (as such term is used in the Original Redevelopment Plan), and more specifically by adding a new Section 4(a)(9)(xxiv) to the Original Redevelopment Plan to read as follows: “Media studio and production company encompassing the development, production, and distribution of media projects including film, television, radio, advertising, internet and social media content” together with such other amendments necessary to be consistent with such additional permitted use (collectively, the “**Redevelopment Plan Amendment**”); and

WHEREAS, as of the date of introduction of this Ordinance on first reading, the Township Council hereby refers the Redevelopment Plan Amendment to the Township Land Use Board for the Township Land Use Board’s review pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-7(e)*; and

WHEREAS, prior to public hearing and final adoption of this Ordinance, the Township Land Use Board will have transmitted to the Township Council a report containing the Township Land Use Board's recommendation concerning the Redevelopment Plan Amendment, including an identification of any provisions in the Redevelopment Plan Amendment that are inconsistent with the Township Master Plan, if any, and recommendations concerning those inconsistencies, if any, and any other matters the Township Land Use Board deems appropriate; and

WHEREAS, subject to receipt of such Township Land Use Board report, the Township Council believes that the adoption of the Redevelopment Plan Amendment is in the best interests of the Township and the redevelopment of the Redevelopment Area.

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 hereof are incorporated herein as though set forth at length herein.

Section 2. Pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-7(e)*, upon passage of this Ordinance on first reading, the Township Council hereby refers the Redevelopment Plan Amendment to the Township Land Use Board for the Township Land Use Board's review. The Township Land Use Board shall prepare a report containing the Township Land Use Board's recommendation concerning the Redevelopment Plan Amendment, including an identification of any provisions in the Redevelopment Plan Amendment that are inconsistent with the Township Master Plan, if any, and recommendations concerning those inconsistencies, if any, and any other matters the Township Land Use Board deems appropriate, and submit same to the Township Council within 45 days after referral, as required by the Redevelopment Law.

Section 3. The Redevelopment Plan Amendment is hereby approved and adopted pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-7*.

Section 4. The zoning district map and the zoning ordinances of the Township are hereby amended to incorporate and reflect the Redevelopment Plan Amendment, and, to the extent provided in the Redevelopment Plan Amendment, are superseded thereby.

Section 5. If any part of this Ordinance shall be deemed invalid, such parts shall be severed and the invalidity thereby shall not affect the remaining parts of this Ordinance.

Section 6. A copy of this Ordinance shall be available for public inspection at the office of the Township Clerk during regular business hours.

Section 7. This Ordinance shall take effect in accordance with all applicable law.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to 5 Minutes Per Person)

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

MOVED: Rizzuto

SECOND: Contino

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the meeting to the public.

Angelina – questioned why nothing has been enforced on Burgher Road.

Doreen Edwards – feels that the County Fire Marshall can help the Township with inspections. Ms. Edwards questioned live participation on Zoom. She commented on garbage companies. Ms. Edwards spoke about a property that was sold and had to be purchased back. Ms. Edwards questioned how the VTMUA gets billed. Ms. Edwards questioned the budget increase and recycling.

Ann Larsen – commented that the taxpayers work hard.

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

MOVED: Rizzuto
SECOND: Contino

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the meeting to the public.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Contino thanked everyone who worked on the budget. He knows that it is not an easy process.

Council Member Rizzuto questioned if we are capable of burning waste oil at our facility. Council Member Rizzuto thanked everyone for bringing the budget to introduction. He reminded everyone with the weather getting nicer, to watch for children playing outside and drive safely. Council Member Rizzuto spoke about a crime that happened and he is happy they were able to bring the person to justice. He thanked the Vernon Police Department and everyone involved.

Council Member Ooms thanked the CFO for the budget and she would like to see the Capital itemized.

Council Member Sparta spoke about the cold case that was solved.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Council Member Higgins commented on the budget presentation. He suggested that there is a more detailed presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:15 pm Council Member Ooms made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member Contino

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR
Municipal Clerk

William Higgins
Council President

Minutes approved: May 18, 2026