

VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

MAY 10, 2021

The Regular Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on May 10, 2021 via Zoom Webinar in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Council Vice President John Auberger presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided to the public and the press on January 6, 2021 and on April 8, 2021 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.

ROLL CALL

Present were Council Members John Auberger, Toni Cilli, Andrew Pitsker and Kelly Weller. Also present were Mayor Howard Burrell, Business Administrator Charles Voelker, CFO Donelle Bright, and Township Attorney Josh Zielinski.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Council Vice President Auberger led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

PROCLAMATION

Older Americans Month May 2021 – Council Member Pitsker read the proclamation.

PUBLIC COMMENTS *(For Current Agenda Items Only, Limited to 3 minutes per person)*

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

MOVED: Andrew Pitsker

SECOND: John Auberger

All members present voted in favor.

Jessi Paladini – Vernon Township, feels that the bond ordinance is one of the largest Vernon has had in years. She feels that Mayor Burrell lied and Ms. Paladini played a recording of the Mayor speaking when he was running for office where he said he was not for trails. Ms. Paladini is especially concerned with the \$900,000 for the pump track.

Peg Distasi – Vernon Township, wanted to clarify that the fire truck that is at the building across from the library on the list to be sold.

Vice President Auberger answered yes.

Ms. Distasi also commented that the bond ordinance is totally irresponsible at this time. She does not believe it should be passed. Ms. Distasi is concerned about the \$900,000 for the pump track because this was not supposed to cost taxpayers any money.

Veronica Castner – Vernon Township, asked if there is an approved plan for the bond as far as the pump track.

Matt McConway – Vernon Township, he feels that when the pump track was talked about years ago it was not supposed to cost the tax payers any money and was supposed to be done by volunteer work. He said he emailed the Mayor and Council because he had someone who would build the pump track for free but no one responded to him.

Natalie Buccieri – Vernon Township, does not know if there are RFPs for the pump track. She feels we are creating a budget without RFPs. She feels this is a lot of money and something the town cannot afford right now and more research should be done.

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

MOTION: Kelly Weller
SECOND: Andrew Pitsker

All members were in favor.

MINUTES

April 26, 2021 – Regular Meeting

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve the above minutes.

MOVED: Andrew Pitsker
SECOND: John Auberger

All members were in favor.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution #21-120: Authorizing Issuance of Estimated Property Tax Bills

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-120

MOVED: Andrew Pitsker
SECOND: Toni Cilli

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-120.

RESOLUTION #21-120

AUTHORIZING ISSUANCE OF ESTIMATED PROPERTY TAX BILLS

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council of the Township of Vernon finds and declares that Township financial officials have determined that there could be insufficient cash flow to support operations in late July, 2021 unless third quarter revenue is received on time; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council further finds and declares that Tax Collector Lisa A. Kimkowski and the Chief Financial Officer, Donelle Bright De Couto, have reviewed and computed an estimated tax levy in accordance with N.J.S.A. 54:4-66.3 and is recommending authorization to issue property tax bills based upon this estimated tax levy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Township of Vernon as follows:

1. That Vernon Township Tax Collector, Lisa A. Kimkowski, is hereby authorized and directed to prepare and issue estimated tax bills for the Township of Vernon for the third quarter of 2021, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 54:4-66-2;
2. That the entire estimated tax levy for CY 2021 is hereby set at \$79,059,367.75; and
3. That Vernon Township Tax Collector, Lisa A. Kimkowski, is hereby authorized to undertake any and all additional steps deemed necessary and appropriate to immediately implement the substance of this Resolution.

Resolution #21-121: Refund Invalid Tax Sale Certificate (Block 527 Lot 33 -US Bank Cust/Pro Cap 8)

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-121

MOVED: Kelly Weller
SECOND: Toni Cilli

A roll call vote was taken:
AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-121.

RESOLUTION # 21-121

**REFUND INVALID TAX SALE CERTIFICATE
(Block 527 Lot 33 – US BANK CUST/PRO CAP 8)**

WHEREAS, The Tax Collector performs a yearly tax sale for prior year unpaid municipal property tax and other unpaid municipal charges.

WHEREAS, a tax sale certificate was incorrectly issued on a property and another account wrongfully credited, creating an invalid certificate.

WHEREAS, the lienholder of the certificate is entitled to a refund for the entirety of the tax sale certificate and all subsequent payments made.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon authorizes the Tax Collector to refund US Bank Cust/Pro Cap 8 in the amount of \$3,108.32 for Tax Sale Certificate No. 20-00088. Incorrectly issued for Block 527 Lot 33 also known as 2 Chamonix Drive, Unit 217, Vernon, NJ.

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

Resolution #21-122: Refund for Total Disabled Veteran (Block 249 Lot 3 – Huber)

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-122

MOVED: Andrew Pitsker

SECOND: Kelly Weller

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-122.

RESOLUTION #21-122

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 249 Lot 3 – Huber)**

WHEREAS, The State of New Jersey, Department of the Treasury, Division of Taxation has favorably awarded a **Homestead Benefit Credit** to a 100% permanent and totally disabled Veteran; and

WHEREAS, the law exempts said property from taxation and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon authorizes the Tax Collector to refund the 2021 2nd quarter credit in the amount of \$945.33 to Terry Huber, Block 249 Lot 3 also known as [REDACTED]

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

Resolution #21-123: Resolution Authorizing the Application to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs “Bullet Proof Vest Partnership/Body Armor Safety Initiative”

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-123

MOVED: Toni Cilli
SECOND: Kelly Weller

A roll call vote was taken:
AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-123.

RESOLUTION #21-123

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPLICATION TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

“Bullet Proof Vest Partnership/Body Armor Safety Initiative”

WHEREAS, the Vernon Township Police Department wishes to apply for funding to the U.S. Department of Justice for the Bullet Proof Vest Partnership/Body Armor Safety Initiative, and

WHEREAS, the grant project consists of reimbursement for up to 50% of the expenses incurred to purchase new issue or replacement bullet proof vests for police officers. “BVP is a critical resource for state and local jurisdictions that saves lives. Based on data collected and recorded by the U.S. Department of Justice, in FY 2012, protective vests were directly attributable to saving the lives of at least 33 law enforcement and corrections officers, in 20 different states, an increase 13.7% over FY 2011. At least 14 of those life-saving vests had been purchased, in part, with BVP funds.” (OJP website, U.S. Department of Justice 2013) This grant is committed to officer safety; and

WHEREAS, Vernon Township will incur the cost of the program, not to exceed \$11000.00 and then submit the necessary documentation to the U.S. Department of Justice for a fifty percent (50%) reimbursement.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Vernon Township declares its support for the “2021 Bullet Proof Vest Partnership/Body Armor Safety Initiative” Grant from June 1st, 2021 – December 31st, 2021 to outfit bullet proof vests for our newly hired police officers or replacement vests for our current police officers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, that the Mayor, Chief Finance Officer and Township Clerk are hereby authorized to execute and sign any and all documents in order to effectuate the receipt of the Grant monies between the Township of Vernon and the U.S. Department of Justice for the “2021 Bullet Proof Vest Partnership/Body Armor Safety Initiative” Grant.

Resolution #21-124: Resolution Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Vehicles and Equipment No Longer needed for Public Use on an Online Auction Website

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-124

Council Member Pitsker asked if anything can be added to the auction list.

Township Administrator Voelker explained that this is the list that will go out for now once the resolution is approved.

Vice President Auberger asked is we are where we should be with returning vehicles to Enterprise.

Administrator Voelker said the vehicles on the auction list do not qualify to be turned into Enterprise.

MOVED: Andrew Pitsker

SECOND: Toni Cilli

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-124.

RESOLUTION #21-124

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF SURPLUS VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT NO LONGER NEEDED FOR PUBLIC USE ON AN ONLINE AUCTION WEBSITE

WHEREAS, the Township has the need on a timely basis to provide for auction of its surplus property; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon has determined that the surplus property described on Schedule “A” attached hereto and incorporated herein is no longer needed for public use; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon through this Resolution gives notice by the intention to the public, that the sale will be by the means of an online auction with Municibid through State Contract T2581 - Auctioneering Services: Internet Auctions to Sell Surplus Property, applicable to all the conditions to current State contracts.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, authorizes the Business Administrator to use the services of Municibid through state contract T2581 to sell the surplus property as indicated on Schedule “A” on an online auction; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-36 that formal public notification will be provided by the publication of a Legal Notice in the official newspaper, the New Jersey Herald, not less than seven (7) or more than fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled auction.

This Resolution will take effect immediately according to law.

Resolution #21-125: Approving Active Volunteer Firefighter for Membership in the New Jersey State Fireman’s Association (Klos)

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-125

MOVED: Kelly Weller

SECOND: Toni Cilli

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Cilli, Pitsker, Weller

NAYES:

ABSTAIN: Auberger

ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-125.

RESOLUTION #21-125

APPROVING ACTIVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE NEW JERSEY STATE FIREMEN’S ASSOCIATION (Klos)

WHEREAS, the Township Council recognizes the extraordinary contributions made by volunteer firefighters to our community and seeks to encourage their full participation in professional organizations; and

WHEREAS, Tyler M. Klos an active firefighter and member of the Highland Lakes Volunteer Fire Department, is requesting approval to submit an application for membership to the New Jersey State Firemen’s Association.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, Sussex County, New Jersey hereby approves Tyler M. Klos for membership in the New Jersey State Firemen’s Association.

Resolution #21-126: Resolution of the Township of Vernon Authorizing the Execution of an Agreement for Municipal Services Between the Township of Vernon and White Oak Drive Association

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-126

Council Member Cilli asked if the lake communities take care of the roads and the Township reimburses them.

Administrator Voelker said yes for snowplowing and in some cases electric or streetlights. Most of the lake communities do not receive funding for that. Ms. Voelker said this contract has been sent out to all the lake communities. The lake communities plow their own roads and we reimburse them for the cost for our DPW to do the work.

Council Member Pitsker asked if the price on the contract is for the year.

CFO Bright explained that it is the total dollar amount we would reimburse them annually.

MOVED: Andrew Pitsker

SECOND: Kelly Weller

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-126.

RESOLUTION #21-126

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AN AGREEMENT FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON AND WHITE OAK DRIVE ASSOCIATION

WHEREAS, the Municipal Services Act (“Act”), N.J.S.A. 40:67-23.1 et seq., provides that qualified private communities are entitled to receive certain municipal services; and

WHEREAS, White Oak Drive Association is a qualified private community as defined under the Act, and the Township of Vernon is a municipality governed by the Act; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon and White Oak Drive Association desire to enter into an Agreement for Municipal service to provide that the Township shall reimburse White Oak Drive Association for certain municipal services as specified in the Agreement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that the Mayor and Clerk are authorized to execute an Agreement for Municipal Services with White Oak Drive Association in a form similar to the agreement attached hereto.

Resolution #21-127: Resolution of the Township of Vernon Authorizing the Execution of an Agreement for Municipal Services Between the Township of Vernon and Baker Road Association

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-127

MOVED: Toni Cilli

SECOND: Andrew Pitsker

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-127.

RESOLUTION #21-127

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AN AGREEMENT FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON AND BAKER ROAD ASSOCIATION

WHEREAS, the Municipal Services Act (“Act”), N.J.S.A. 40:67-23.1 et seq., provides that qualified private communities are entitled to receive certain municipal services; and

WHEREAS, Baker Road Association is a qualified private community as defined under the Act, and the Township of Vernon is a municipality governed by the Act; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon and Baker Road Association desire to enter into an Agreement for Municipal service to provide that the Township shall reimburse Baker Road Association for certain municipal services as specified in the Agreement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that the Mayor and Clerk are authorized to execute an Agreement for Municipal Services with Baker Road Association in a form similar to the agreement attached hereto.

Resolution #21-128: Resolution of the Township of Vernon Authorizing the Execution of an Access Agreement with Cablevision Lightpath NJ, LLC

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-128

MOVED: Kelly Weller

SECOND: Toni Cilli

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-128.

RESOLUTION #21-128

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AN ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH CABLEVISION LIGHTPATH NJ, LLC

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon (“Township”) will be receiving internet services from Cablevision Lightpath NJ, LLC (“Lightpath”); and

WHEREAS, Lightpath will need to install, maintain, and operate infrastructure to provide the internet services to the Township; and

WHEREAS, a determination has been made that it is in the best interests of the Township to enter a property access agreement with Lightpath so that the aforementioned internet services can be provided.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that the Mayor and Clerk are authorized to execute a property access agreement with Cablevision Lightpath NJ, LLC in a form similar to the agreement attached hereto.

Resolution #21-129: Resolution of the Township of Vernon Authorizing the Award of a Contract to Cablevision Lightpath NJ, LLC for Internet Service Through the ESCNJ Co-Op

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-129

MOVED: Toni Cilli

SECOND: Kelly Weller

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-129.

RESOLUTION #21-129

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF A CONTRACT TO CABLEVISION LIGHPATH NJ, LLC FOR INTERNET SERVICE THROUGH THE ESCNJ CO-OP

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon (“Township”) has a need for internet service in the municipal building; and

WHEREAS, the Township is a member of the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey Cooperative (“ESCNJ Co-op”); and

WHEREAS, a service agreement is available from Cablevision Lightpath NJ, LLC (“Lightpath”) through ESCNJ Co-op Bid No. 18/19-46; and

WHEREAS, public bids are not required for purchases made through a cooperative pricing system in accordance with the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-11(6); and

WHEREAS, the maximum amount for fulfillment of the agreement is \$39024.00 and the Chief Financial Officer has certified that availability of funds in the annexed certification; and

WHEREAS, a determination has been made that it is in the best interests of the Township to procure internet service from Lightpath through ESCNJ Co-op Bid No. 18/19-46.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that an agreement for internet service is hereby awarded to Cablevision Lightpath NJ, LLC in accordance with the terms and conditions in ESCNJ Bid No. 18/19-46, and the Mayor and Township Clerk are hereby authorized to execute same.

Certification of Funds

Amount: Not to exceed \$39024.00

Account: 0-01-31-430-20

CFO Signature: _____

Subject to the Adoption of the 2022 and 2023 Municipal Budgets

COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Resolution #21-130: Appointment to the Vernon Township Municipal Utility Authority (Shortway, Galway)

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to approve resolution #21-130

MOVED: Toni Cilli
SECOND: Andrew Pitsker

A roll call vote was taken:
AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Shortway

Motion passed to approve Resolution #21-130.

RESOLUTION #21-130

APPOINTMENT TO THE VERNON TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL UTILITY AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, the Vernon Township Municipal Utilities Authority (“VTMUA”) is a duly established utilities authority pursuant to the Municipal and County Utilities Authorities Law, N.J.S.A. 40:14B-1, et seq.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, and STATE OF NEW JERSEY, that the following individuals are hereby appointed as a member of the Vernon Township Municipal Utility Authority, effective 5/10/2021, for a term specified as follows:

Harry Shortway	Alternate 1
Expiring 02/01/2026 (unexpired term)	
Scott Galway	Alternate 2
Expiring 02/01/2025 (unexpired term)	

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Township Clerk shall send a certified copy of this resolution to the following:

Vernon Township Municipal Utilities Authority

INTRODUCTION/1ST READING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE

******Council President Shortway entered the meeting at 7:30 pm.**

Ordinance #21-12: Bond Ordinance Appropriating \$4,015,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$3,130,000 Bonds or Notes of the Township, for Various Improvements or Purposes Authorized to be Undertaken by the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey

Council Vice President Auberger read by title Ordinance #21-12.

Council Vice President Auberger asked for a motion to introduce Ordinance #21-12.

Council Member Pitsker asked if the itemized spreadsheets the Council received could be on the agenda for the next meeting. He said the average homeowner will pay about \$32.00 a year. This is an investment in mostly capital equipment as well as track and trail. Council Member Pitsker asked if our debt would actually shrink with this bond.

CFO Bright clarified that the total on the bond ordinance is \$4,015,000 the actual debt authorized is \$3,130,000. The majority of the bond is for capital areas in the Township. Our total debt last year was 1.072% with this bond ordinance it is 1.070% because we have paid down debt already this year. So even with the increase of this \$3,130,000 we will still see a decrease in our overall debt.

Council Member Cilli asked if this will raise peoples' taxes.

CFO Bright said this will not raise peoples' taxes. She explained that a bond ordinance authorizes you to take out a debt. This does not mean I go and take out a \$3,000,000 loan from the bank. Ms. Bright said part of her job as the CFO is to do cash management. She is not going to take out a loan tomorrow. It will be based on when these projects are going to be finished and what the interest rate is at the time. It will be based on what is best for the town.

Council Member Pitsker said the actually portion of the pump track comes out to \$5.80 per household.

Council Member Weller said that there are road improvements in the pump track portion as well.

CFO Bright explained that when you are reading the bond ordinance a large portion is for road improvements. Road improvements need to be made on Black Creek Drive and there is also a proposed road with access on Omega Drive. These are proposed projects and we have not gone out to bid on them, these are estimated from our Township Engineer. CFO Bright said if we come under the estimates, we will cancel the debt.

Council Member Cilli said we have bonded or went out for debt in 2011 \$3.8 million for Great Gorge sewer and \$2.06 for SCUMA for 5 years of payment. Council Member Cilli commented that this ordinance is for the roads, an ambulance, things for the fire department and to fix Maple Grange. This ordinance is not just for the pump track. This is something that is good for our town.

Council President Shortway commented that we are also looking at the fuel tank. He spoke about this when he was Mayor, with Baldwin Fuel moving the town was going to go to its own fuel filling station. This will cost about \$225,000. This is another major improvement to township properties.

Administrator Voelker said this will lead to a possible shared service with the Board of Education.

Mayor Burrell commented that we need to invest in our town. The last time we invested in the town was Main Street. These are smart investments that we thought about a great deal. It will be a good shared service agreement with the BOE when Baldwin Fuel goes out. We have had people ask us about electric charging stations and we will look at this as a possibility. Mayor Burrell feels that this will be a major plus for our town. Interest rates are low and we would be foolish if we did not get the permission to this right now.

Council President Shortway also mentioned the lighting at Veterans Memorial Park is about 40 years old. In 2019 the line blew and there was fire on a pole with children present. Things break and wear out and we have to go forward. Council President Shortway said we do not want to repeat what happened at the Maple Grange fields when they were closed down and not replacing and this is another \$350,000. This is an investment in our total community

Council Member Cilli asked if there would be a presentation for the pump track and trails for the public.

Mayor Burrell said yes, we will most likely have a special town meeting We will have some renderings of what the town will look like in the future as well as estimates on costs. We will be doing this hopefully very soon.

MOVED: Andrew Pitsker

SECOND: Toni Cilli

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Auberger, Cilli, Pitsker, Weller, Shortway

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion passed to introduce Ordinance #21-12.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (*Limited to 3 Minutes On Any Topic*)

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

MOTION: Andrew Pitsker

SECOND: Kelly Weller

All members were in favor.

Al Losco - President of Glen Harbor Homeowners Association emailed saying, I would just like to follow up on the shooting incident that was discussed at the last meeting. Are there any updates? Thank you for your concern.

Mayor Burrell said he returned a call to Mr. Losco this morning but got no answer and he left a message.

Jessi Paladini – Vernon Township, feels that the sewers have nothing to do with borrowing to do regular maintenance that a town needs to do and we had no choice with the sewers. Ms. Paladini feels that we should be using set aside capital improvement funds and these projects should be a pay-as-you-go.

Peg Distasi – Vernon Township, agrees with 90% of the town improvements. She is opposed to spending \$900,000 to build a trail and pump track at taxpayers' expense. Ms. Distasi said they were told that none of this would cost the taxpayers any money. She agrees that there should be a capital fund created and asked that the Council does not put the town into further debt. She feels that roads, fire department and an ambulance are necessary vehicles and expenses but a trail and pump track are not. Ms. Distasi is glad to hear that the Mayor will hold a public meeting and we will hear some facts.

Walter Marsico – Vernon Township, quoted the Mayor's comments from the April 26th meeting that he found disturbing. Mr. Marsico said the Mayor works for the taxpayers and business owners and whether good or bad he should be addressing issues. Mr. Marsico feels that the town's administration is on a witch hunt to intimidate him and his family and no one has returned his phone calls or emails. Mr. Marsico is trying to build a house and feels that he is being attacked. He said the town is trying to get COAH payments from him that he feels he is exempt from.

Natalie Buccieri – Vernon Township, asked if the Council has discussed going back to in person meetings and if so, what is the timeline.

Beverly Marsico – Vernon Township, asked why no one could respond to Mr. Marsico emails for the harassment and extortion of money.

Council President Shortway remarked that point of order, Mr. Marsico already spoke.

Council Vice President Auberger allowed Mr. Marsico to speak a second time.

Walter Marsico – Vernon Township, asked who from the Township Administration is driving by at night in a personal vehicle and photographing his house whether anyone lives there or not. He finds this disturbing. He feels that this is why the town has no new construction.

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

MOTION: Kelly Weller

SECOND: Andrew Pitsker

All members were in favor.

MAYOR COMMENTS

In my February 8, 2021 Mayor's Report, I advised the Council and the public that the town had successfully cleaned up the debris field to which the New Jersey DEP had been directed by Mr. Joe Wallace and those who have chosen to use their Facebook pages to partner with him.

Mr. Wallace is the infamous individual that Vernon residents, and most in the tristate area, know very well as a result of the unfortunate negative national news coverage that our town received from the illegal toxic waste mountain that Mr. Wallace created in the Silver Spruce Drive area of our town. I also shared the fact that the Mayor's Office had informed the New Jersey DEP of our successful debris field cleanup, and had invited them to come to our town and review and inspect our work.

The DEP accepted our invitation, and made their inspection visit on this past April 13.

The following are the two key DEP conclusions that resulted from that April 13 visit:

CONCLUSION # 1: After a detailed and in-depth inspection, the DEP concluded that our debris field cleanup effort was thorough and complete.

CONCLUSION # 2: This conclusion came as a result of the fact that the DEP advised that a few Vernon residents had repeatedly claimed that there was toxic solid waste buried all over this piece of town property.

This is a large piece of town owned property, with a small portion being occupied by our Department of Public Works' Temporary Storage Facility, and another small portion being the location where we plan to build a Municipal Pump Track.

As a result of these repeated claims by a few Vernon residents, the DEP chose to dig test pits in eight distinct different locations over the entire property, as part of their efforts to confirm once and for all, if there was or if there was not, toxic solid waste buried on this property.

To ensure that the test pits would be sufficient to reveal any toxic solid waste that might be buried on this property, at the DEP directions, our Department of Public Works crew dug test pits that were 8-10 ft deep; 5-7 ft wide; and 8-10 ft in length.

This second conclusion by the DEP, was that not a single test pit revealed any solid waste, toxic or non-toxic, buried on this property.

With these two positive conclusions from the New Jersey DEP, the Mayor and Council will now proceed expeditiously with specific actions that are required to make a Municipal Pump Track a reality. Now I understand that these two key conclusions from the New Jersey DEP will not appeal to, or even be accepted by, those who have been the authors of the angry, negative, and misleading frequent Facebook posts claiming that this property was nothing but a "toxic waste dump".

However, now that the truth has been confirmed by the State Department of Environmental Protection, I issue this invitation to those residents who might have been misled by these angry, negative, and misleading frequent Facebook posts often filled with half-truths - -

I invite them to join with the Mayor and Council, and the great majority of other Vernon residents, as part of the unified team that's working together to MOVE VERNON FORWARD. We want and need them to become part of the VERNON STRONG team!

This open and factual approach that the Mayor and Council has taken to addressing this claim of a "toxic waste dump", is but just the latest example of the Mayor and Council working together to do our due diligence, so as to ensure that we do the right thing for our town and its residents.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Weller reminded everyone that the first farmer's market is scheduled for May 22, 2021. This has been a great event in the past and she encourages everyone to attend. There are over 20 vendors which is more than we have ever had.

Council Member Cilli commented that the cost of the trail keeps being bought up as \$900,000 but \$425,000 should go to the roads. Therefore, the trail would only use \$475,000 and this still needs to go out to bid.

CFO Bright explained that a large portion of that will be taken from the Open Space Fund. The whole project cost is in the bond ordinance which is \$900,000 and \$291,000 was approved in the referendum.

Andrew Pitsker commented saying that Councilman Auberger and myself had the opportunity to visit with the DPW on Thursday April 29 to tour the DPW garage and see the new Road Mower Purchase. I was concern with the amount of money we spend on such equipment and wanted to make sure we as taxpayers are getting our monies worth.

Ed Babcock and Pete Ribello took the time to show us the mower and other equipment and the importance of why these items are necessary.

I was very satisfied that not only are they buying the right equipment, but that they are getting the best value for the money.

I appreciate that Safety comes first and Mr. Ribello who specs out all of the Purchases for the DPW does a great job.

Thanks Ed & Pete for your time.

Regarding the Mayors comments on the DEP inspection of the DPW / Bicycle Pump track site. As I said in previous meetings and outings, we as stewards of the Town.

We are responsible for making this situation legally and morally right. This is a confirmation we take the publics concerns seriously and act in the proper and professional manner that brings resolution to all involved.

I hope we can complete the process in short time and move on to the next phase of doing something progressive for Town Center

Regarding the Bond Ordinance 21-12, I agree, this a big. But the investments in Capital equipment and our town infrastructure of the Track & Trail is important and financially doable. In my review and lots of questions regarding our investments, I feel it is time we make these investments if Town Center is going to have some revitalization. Town Center has laid fallow for too long.

When it comes to the BPT and the trails, I see this as an investment in our town center. When was the last time, we have made a serious investment other than Water and Sewer? If we are going to attract businesses to develop on Church street, which in my opinion has lied dormant for too long. We have to show we are serious about investing in our town. Albeit, this may not be the vision of some, but we are a recreational & destinations community for outdoor activities, so why not use that characteristic to help Vernon attract new opportunities.

This trail system has a future, if we think about it, we have the opportunity to connect to other communities in the future. Consider this, in Orange County NY, there is a Heritage Trail system that goes from Goshen to Harriman, 14 miles, and with that has come development and growth. Why can't we connect to Warwick and Hardyston, it is feasible... if we work together to find solutions We can do the same, but we have to start from somewhere. It is time we did something. I have lived here for 29 years, what have we done to invest in town center?

I believe this is one way. It is a solution, if you have solutions, please be part of the answer. If all you can do is complain, what value does that bring unless you have a solution and want to participate.

Bringing communication, collaboration and cooperation together is how we get things done.

Additionally, I have been working with the administration and urge the mayor to present the plans, vision and answer the questions to the public, and I hope we can soon present the proposed BMP / Trail and the justification for doing so, I am for one trying to work toward viable, realistic solutions and being part of moving Vernon forward, but it takes time and we need to invest. Ordinance 21-12 is part of that and again, I support it.

If anyone would like to have a direct dialogue with me, I am open to discussion. Just email mail me at APitsker@vernontwp.com

Those are my comments for tonight.

Vice President Auberger elaborated with Council Member Pitsker about visiting the DPW and seeing the road mower that was purchased. He said a lot of research went into this vehicle and it should serve the town for a long time. Part of the cost was for extended warranties. This was really thought out and a job was well done on the purchase.

Vice President Auberger commented that a few weeks ago was opening day of Little League as well as the fishing contest at the firehouse and they were handing out tree saplings. He said it was really good to see the town back to being as normal as can be and people being nice to each other.

Vice President Auberger said he and the Mayor reached out through the Recreation Committee to the VFW because the State is allowing parades again. Whether the parade happens or not the VFW will still be having their ceremony on Memorial Day so he hopes people come out.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Council President Shortway had no comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business to be conducted on the agenda, a motion for adjournment was made by Council President Shortway, seconded by Council Member Weller with all members voting in favor.

The Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR
Municipal Clerk

Harry Shortway,
Council President

Minutes approved: May 24, 2021