

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 23, 2022 7:00 PM**

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on May 23, 2022 via Zoom Webinar and in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Council President Patrick Rizzuto presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided to the public and the press on January 14, 2022 and on May 3, 2022 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.

Council President Rizzuto asked for a moment of silence for Kevin Mitchell, owner of the tracks Deli.

ROLL CALL

Present were Council Members Natalie Buccieri, Michael Furrey, Brian Lynch, Harry Shortway and Council President Patrick Rizzuto. Also present were Mayor Howard Burrell, Business Administrator Charles Voelker, Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio and Township Attorney Marlin Townes.

PROCLAMATIONS

Maverick Brendli – Eagle Scout Project

Council Member Lynch read the proclamation. Senator Steven Oroho was present to honor Maverick Brendli with the Council and the Mayor and Rich Carson of the Historic Preservation Society.

Memorial Day 2022

Council Member Buccieri read the proclamation.

Older American Month May 2022

Council President Rizzuto read the proclamation.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Cannabis Ordinance – Saturday Special Meeting

The Council feels that a workshop meeting is necessary and decided to have a public meeting on Thursday, June 9, 2022 at 6:00 pm.

REVIEW OF BILLS LIST

The Council had no questions or comments on the bills list.

MAYOR COMMENTS

In part, because our town is 70 square miles, and we have 103 miles of roads and streets that the town has the direct and sole responsibility to care for and maintain, we have developed a formal 5-Year Road Maintenance Plan to guide us in using the town's tax dollars in a way that will enable us to maintain those 103 miles of roads and streets in the best possible condition that we can, given the financial resources that are available to us.

The 103 miles of roadway is made up of 33 miles of highly used arterial roads that handle the high volumes of traffic going in, through and out of our town; plus 70 miles of residential roads and streets.

Our 5-Year Road Maintenance Plan lists every road and street for which the town has direct and sole responsibility, plus the time frame when we plan to pave or resurface each of those roads and streets.

That paving or resurfacing schedule could change due to one of the following three reasons:

1. Our annual after winter inspections of roads and streets, or residents confirmed reports of a specific road or street condition, reveals that a particular road or street should be moved to a higher priority on the 5-Year Road Maintenance Plan;
2. If an emergency condition force us to alter the 5-Year Road Maintenance Plan; or ...
3. If the availability or lack of availability of paving and/or resurfacing materials require that we alter the 5-Year Road Maintenance Plan. This has proving to be a key negative factor in our road repair and maintenance plans over the past several months, as the availability of materials is impacted by labor shortages and supply change limitations.

We maintain the 33 miles of highly used arterial roads by paving them with asphalt.

We maintain the 70 miles of residential roads and streets by resurfacing them with oil and stone.

While the oil and stone resurfacing method is not my favorite, I do understand and support the financial logic behind our town's decision to use this method during the past several years.

The logic is simple - - it costs six times more to surface a road or street with asphalt, than it does to surface that same road or street with oil and stone.

It's a matter of the cost effective and efficient use of the tax dollars made available to us.

While almost 2M\$, or 67% of this year's Department of Public Works total budget, is allocated for road maintenance and repairs, the ever-escalating cost of materials is limiting what we can accomplish with this amount of funds.

For example, through the Sussex County Corporative, a cost savings purchasing organization, we started this year by being able to purchase asphalt for \$77 per ton; the cost recently increased to \$82 per ton; and, we have been recently advised that supply chain issues will result in the cost of this key material being adjusted, and likely adjusted upward, on a bi-monthly basis.

I assure you that given the factors and challenges that we face, we are doing the best that we can to maintain our roads and streets through the cost effective and efficient use of the tax dollars that Vernon's residents and business make available to us.

As I have previously said, while a Bicycle Pump Track will, without a doubt, be one more amenity that will:

1. Make Vernon a more enjoyable and recreational healthy town in which to live; and ...
2. Enhance Vernon's status as the premier four seasons municipality in northwest New Jersey in which individuals can enjoy a host of outdoor activities . . .

While all of these things are true, the motivating factor to me is that this special amenity is an investment in our Town Center area, that will serve as a magnet to attract a host of individuals to our Town Center area, which enterprising business owners will view as potential new customers; and, that these potentially new customers will be a motivation to these enterprising business owners to develop new businesses in our Town Center.

The following are eight summary update points which reveal where we stand at this time with moving forward with this investment:

1. The award-winning design and build firm, Spohn Ranch, that earned the contract to build this investment in our Town Center, started their work on the Pump Track in the fall of last year.

2. The first portion of their work included the preparation of several proposed designs of the Pump Track, and reworking and amending those designs until one design was approved.
3. Once the design was approved, the construction of the Pump Track by representatives of Spohn Ranch began in November with the utilization of asphalt millings that originated from the township's road paving projects. These millings serve as the foundation of the Pump Track; they will be a key part of the base for the final asphalt Pump Track surface.
4. Because cold weather is not conducive to the placement of the final Pump Track asphalt surface, Spohn Ranch had to suspend their work activities during the winter months. Final work activities, such as placing the final asphalt track surface, installing drainage and the preparation of border areas, will be resuming this spring, as appropriate weather permits.
5. In preparation for starting the final construction phase of the Pump Track, Spohn Ranch has already delivered some of the prefabricated parts that will be used in the Pump Track's construction, and will be mobilizing additional equipment and materials to the site prior to the restart of work activities.
6. The current plan of action calls for Spohn Ranch's work activities to resume at the construction site during the last week of this month. Weather permitting, we anticipate that the construction of the Town Center Pump Track will be completed by the end of June.
7. Just as our town did after the construction of Maple Grange Park, and the completion of other municipal contractor projects, there will be some things that we will have to do as part of the town's acceptance of its responsibility for the appearance of municipal facilities, and the reasonable safety of those facilities for those who use them.
8. At this point in time, we anticipate a formal summer time opening for this Town Center investment.

A large amount of documented, positive and creditable civic and commercial data reveals that in other communities throughout our nation like Vernon, where their Town Center areas exists along busy, heavily traveled state and county highways, that make it not safe for residents and visitors to leisurely walk or bike - - -

In other communities throughout our nation like Vernon, planned amenities like our planned Walking & Biking Trail serve as strong attractions and catalysis to bring a host of individuals and potential new customers into the Town Center area; and, that these potential new customers often serve as a motivation to enterprising business owners to develop new businesses in the Town Center.

My commitment to reasonable investment in our Town Center area has been, and still is, motivated by the simple fact that we need Town Center commercial development in order to provide more municipal tax dollars to help or homeowners share the cost of an effective and efficient municipal government; and to provide our residents the additional services and conveniences that they want and need.

After reviewing the results of five bids received from contractors who desired to construct the Trail, two appropriate municipal service providers - - those being our Township Engineer and our Qualified Purchasing Agent - - recommended that the municipality award the construction contract to the firm that met the criteria as the lowest responsible bidder under the New Jersey Local Public Contracts Law.

And on December 13, 2021, via Resolution # 21-286, the Council approved my recommendation that a contract to construct the Trail be awarded to Salmon Bros., Inc. of Netcong, NJ.

Salmon Bros. started their work on the Trail on May 17; they are on schedule to complete their work on or before the July 1, 2022 completion date that's listed in the contract.

I take this opportunity to remind the Vernon Family of the following two important events that will take place in our town before the next Council meeting:

1. After being halted by the COVID virus for the last two years, on next Monday, May 30th, our VFW Post 8441 will resume their annual tradition of hosting a Town Memorial Day Parade. This year's parade will begin at 10am at the Dairy Queen on State Route 94, and will travel down State Route 94 to Church Street past the Municipal Center, down to Vernon Crossing Road to Veterans Memorial Park, where a Memorial Day Ceremony will be held.

2. Event number two will be a Music in the Park Concert sponsored by our outstanding Board of Recreation. This event will take place at Maple Grange Park from 5pm-7pm on Saturday, June 4th.

At the last Council meeting, the Council President demanded that I give him an answer as to who owns the street, Black Creek Drive, in our township.

Research of municipal records on this question reveals no indication that this has been a question that has ever come before the town's governing body, or that any town official has been concerned about, before now.

And it's notable that this includes the 2011 through 2017 period when the Council President previously served as a Council member.

So, the real question is, why has the Council President chosen to make this a big, pressing issue at this time.

I believe that the truthful answer is that this sudden great concern is simply another part of the Council President's strategy to keep his commitment to his Facebook and other allies to "kill the pump track".

This conclusion is supported by the fact that the question of "Who owns Black Creek Drive", first came to my attention in early April when I was shown a Facebook post which proposed using the question of the ownership of Black Creek Drive as a way of "killing the pump track".

Because this post was (1) made on a Facebook page that's owned and managed by an individual who almost never has anything positive to say about our town, and (2) made on a Facebook page where negative conspiracy theories and rumors are not only born, but are promoted - - because of this, I didn't take this post very seriously.

However, when a few days later, the Council President called Municipal Engineer Stoner and asked him about the ownership of Black Creek Drive, it was then that the Mayor's Office asked Municipal Engineer Stoner to review the appropriate documents in an effort to answer the question of the ownership of this town road.

Because decades ago, some property related transfer documents were not recorded, were not detailed, and/or were not maintained in the way that they are now, determining with 100% certainty as to who owns this town road has not been, and will not be, quick, easy or simple.

After Municipal Engineer Stoner completes his research into this matter, he and the Administration will coordinate his findings with Municipal Attorney Zielinski so as to determine where we are legally on the question of the ownership of Black Creek Drive.

I will provide the Council and the public the results of our findings when that all are available to me.

However, at this time, there are 7 things that we know for sure:

- 1.** The Town has snow plowed and maintained Black Creek Drive over the past two-plus decades, under the assumption that it is a town owned road.
- 2.** Municipal records show that during the period over the past two-plus decades, no member of our town's municipal governing body has ever officially expressed any doubts or concerns as to if Black Creek Drive was a Town owned road; nor has any member of our town's municipal governing body ever complained about the town spending taxpayer resources for the snow plowing and maintaining of Black Creek Drive.
- 3.** From the time four and a half decades ago, when the town purchased the 11-plus acres of land located at the end of Black Creek Drive, it has assumed that it has a Right-A-Way - - that is the authority - - to use Black Creek Drive to get to this property, and has in fact routinely done so.

4. When, in the early 1990s, the Town established its DPW Temporary Storage Facility on a portion of this 11-plus acres of land, it was acting on the assumption that it has a Right-A-Way and the authority to use Black Creek Drive to get to this property;
5. When, in the early 2000s, the Town built its sewer system's Pump Station # 1 on a portion of this 11-plus acres of land, it was acting on the assumption that it has a Right-A-Way and the authority to use Black Creek Drive to get to this property;
6. When the town made the decision to build a Town Center Bicycle Pump Track on a portion of this 11-plus acres of land, it was acting on that same decades-old assumption that it has a Right-A-Way and the authority to use Black Creek Drive to get to this property; and ...
7. The Administration's research of this matter so far has not revealed anything that even indicates that the Town does not have a Right-A-Way and the authority to use Black Creek Drive to get to our DPW Temporary Storage Facility, our sewer system's Pump Station # 1, our Town Center Bicycle Pump Track, or any other amenity that the town might choose to locate on the 11-plus acres of land that it owns at the end of Black Creek Drive.

I end by saying that to the extent that this Black Creek Drive ownership issue, or any other issue, that might be raised as a way of "killing the pump track", it's not going to work; the Town Center Bicycle Pump Track will be built.

Council President Rizzuto said this is not a matter difference, but he feels that this project was not properly thought out, ill-conceived, ill-thought out and ill-tasks. Council President Rizzuto explained that there is \$290,000 set aside for the improvement of Black Creek Drive and he asked the Township Engineer if that was enough for the completion of the project with that amount of money. The Township Engineer said he thought so. Why would you not want to be able to prove ownership and take this township out of position of being at risk by providing some type of ownership proof rather than proceeding.

Council Member Lynch appreciated the update on the 5-year road plan. Council Member Lynch feels that there has been tension over Black Creek Drive. He asked if we are going to cease work until these legal questions are answered or are we going to let the work continue through the legal answers. He feels we should stop the work until the legal questions are answered because we do not to put money towards something that we do not own.

Council Member Buccieri also thanked the Mayor for the update on the 5-year road plan. She listened to what the Mayor said about Black Creek Drive and she believes that each of the eight points were based on an assumption. Council Member Buccieri does not feel we should spend almost \$300,000 based on an assumption. She feels we should not spend any more tax payer's dollars until we know that we own the road.

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

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

MOVED: Natalie Buccieri
 SECOND: Michael Furrey

A roll call vote was taken to open the meeting to the public

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto
 NAYES:
 ABSTAIN:
 ABSENT:

Motion passed to open the meeting to the public.

Judy Storms - Vernon Township, express concern regarding the cannabis ordinance because of the message it will give children.

Christine Dunn – Glenwood, showed great concern regarding resolution #22-138 authorizing issuance of estimated tax bills because she is worried about an increase in taxes.

Council President Rizzuto explained that this will not increase taxes and this resolution represents the fact that we do not have a new tax rate from the County therefore taxes are estimated until we get the new tax rate.

Mark Heftler – Vernon Township, spoke against resolution #22-130 opposing certain aspects of assembly bill 4454 adopted into law on March 1, 2021.

Wale Ibrahim – Garden State Green Generics, spoke in favor of the cannabis ordinance and he hopes that the Council passes the ordinance so there is no delay in their application to get a cultivation license.

Ann Larson – Vernon Township, feels that the Township should have a hiring freeze. Ms. Larson feels that Council Member Shortway should abstain from voting for any farm assessment and cannabis cultivation. Ms. Larson thanked the Council for approving the diversity resolution. She also thanked Council President Rizzuto for being gratuitous enough to review the cannabis ordinance in such detail.

Thomas McClachrie – Vernon Township, is in favor of lowering his property taxes by getting industry in the Township.

Bill Diresta – Vernon Township, said in the election 61% voted in favor of marijuana legalization. He also explained that if the Council passes resolution #22-130 we will lose funding for the schools.

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

MOVED: Brian Lynch

SECOND: Natalie Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken to close the meeting to the public

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion passed to close the meeting to the public.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution #22-130: Resolution of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex and State of New Jersey Opposing Certain Aspects of Assembly Bill 4454 Adopted into Law on March 1, 2021

Resolution #22-131: Refund Overpayment (Block 161 and Lot 37 Wells Fargo Real Estate Tax Services)

Resolution #22-132: Refund Overpayment (Block 446 Lot 15-Solidifi Title)

Resolution #22-133: Refund Overpayment (Block 526 Lot 343-Karin L Pieper)

Resolution #22-134: Refund Overpayment (Block 508 Lot 29-Foundation Title)

Resolution #22-135: Refund Overpayments (Various Block and Lots CORELOGIC)

Resolution #22-136: Authorizing Contracts with Certain Approved State Contract Vendors Beyer Ford State Contract A88214

Resolution #22-137: A Resolution Renewing the Group Dental Benefits Program for Eligible Employees and Their Covered Dependents Through Delta Dental of New Jersey, Inc.

Resolution #22-138: Authorizing Issuance of Estimated Property Tax Bills

Resolution #22-139: Resolution Urging the Swift Passage of S-330/A3804, Which Shall Restore the energy Tax Receipts to Municipalities

Resolution #22-140: Approving a Charitable Solicitor's Permit: Pochuck Valley Fire Department, Inc.

Council President Rizzuto asked for to approve resolutions #22-130, #22-131, #22-132, #22-133, #22-134, #22-135, #22-136, #22-137, #22-138, #22-139

MOVED: Brian Lynch

SECOND: Michael Furrey

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion passed to approve resolutions #22-130, #22-131, #22-132, #22-133, #22-134, #22-135, #22-136, #22-137, #22-138, #22-139

RESOLUTION #22-130

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, COUNTY OF SUSSEX AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY OPPOSING CERTAIN ASPECTS OF ASSEMBLY BILL 4454 ADOPTED INTO LAW ON MARCH 1, 2021

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Legislature and Governor have adopted and enacted amendments to the New Jersey Educational Curriculum for the 2021-2022 school year with respect to instruction on diversity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, in addition, the legislation provides for discussion and topics in connection with gender and sexual orientation as part of the curriculum for kindergarten through twelfth grade beginning in the 2021-2022 school year; and

WHEREAS, while the Council of the Township of Vernon supports the diversity and inclusion aspects of the curriculum, the governing body does not support discussion and materials relating to sexual orientation for children beginning with the kindergarten curriculum; and

WHEREAS, members of the governing body have seen excerpts of the proposed curriculum and believe that same are inappropriate for the age of children attending kindergarten for such instruction and discussion regarding sexual and gender entities with the concern that it does not provide parents the right to consider opting out of sexual orientation discussions or instruction on behalf of their children, nor does it provide for any other limitation or guidance with respect to sexual and gender discussion except that it must be implemented in the curriculum for students in grades through twelve.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, and State of New Jersey that the governing body endorses the instruction for students with respect to diversity and inclusion, however, it does not support sexual identity orientation discussions or instruction for children at such a young age without parental notification and consideration of the materials and the parental right to preclude their children from such discussions and/or instruction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council is concerned as to the extent of the materials and graphics that would be included as part of such instruction, discussion and curriculum materials for young children without parental notification and input.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution shall be forwarded to Governor Philip D. Murphy, Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D., Acting Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education, NJ State Board of Education, the 24th District Legislators, the Sussex County Clerk, the Board of County Commissioners of Sussex County, the Board of Commissioners of Warren County, the Officers of the State Senate and the General Assembly, the Secretary of the Vernon Township School Board of Education, and all Municipalities in the County of Sussex.

This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

RESOLUTION #22-131

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT
(Block 161 and Lot 37 Wells Fargo Real Estate Tax Services)**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Wells Fargo Real Estate Tax Services in the amount of \$1,883.45 representing refund for overpayment of the following property taxes:

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Jurgensen	161	37	\$1,883.45
		TOTAL:	\$1,883.45

Jurgensen- refund for overpayment totaling \$1,883.45 of 1st qtr. 2022 property taxes for Block 161 Lot 37 also known as [REDACTED]

RESOLUTION #22-132

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT
(Block 446 Lot 15- Solidifi Title)**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Solidifi Title in the amount of \$1,711.93 representing refund for overpayment of 2nd qtr. 2020 property taxes for Block 446 Lot 15 also known as [REDACTED]

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Graves	446	15	\$1,711.93
		TOTAL:	\$1,711.93

RESOLUTION #22-133

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT
(Block 526 Lot 343- Karin L Pieper)**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Karin L. Pieper in the amount of \$1982.31 representing refund for overpayment of 3rd qtr. 2017 property taxes for Block 526 Lot 343 also known as [REDACTED].

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
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Pieper	526	343	\$1982.31
		TOTAL:	\$1982.31

RESOLUTION #22-134

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT
(Block 508 Lot 29- Foundation Title)**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Foundation Title in the amount of \$2,009.97 representing refund for overpayment of 4th qtr. 2020 property taxes for Block 508 Lot 29 also known as [REDACTED]

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Gillham	508	29	\$2,009.97
		TOTAL:	\$2,009.97

RESOLUTION #22-135

**REFUND OVERPAYMENTS
(Various Block and Lots CORELOGIC)**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Corelogic in the amount of \$10,870.23 representing refund for overpayment for the following properties:

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Bergner	173	13	\$1,801.96
Mathews	161	64	\$1,409.47
Dinger	478	8	\$2,607.84
Rickert	576	127	\$1,981.25
Franklin	571	8	\$3,069.71
		TOTAL:	\$10,870.23

Bergner- refund for overpayment totaling \$1,801.96 of 4th qtr. 2021 property taxes for Block 173 Lot 13 also known as 6 [REDACTED]

Mathews- refund for overpayment totaling \$1,409.47 of the 3rd qtr. 2021 property taxes for Block 161 Lot 64 also known as [REDACTED]

Dinger- refund for overpayment totaling \$2607.84 of the 4th qtr. 2021 property taxes for Block 478 Lot 8 also known as [REDACTED]

Rickert- refund for overpayment totaling \$1981.25 of the 3rd qtr. 2021 property taxes for Block 576 Lot 127 also known as [REDACTED]

Franklin- refund for overpayment totaling \$3,609.71 of the 3rd qtr. 2021 property taxes for Block 571 Lot 8 also known as [REDACTED]

RESOLUTION #22-136

**AUTHORIZING CONTRACTS
WITH CERTAIN APPROVED STATE CONTRACT VENDORS
BEYER FORD STATE CONTRACT A88214**

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Local Publics Contract Law N.J.S.A.40A:11-12, authorizes the Township of Vernon by resolution, and without advertising for bids or obtaining quotations, purchase any goods or services under the State Contract; and

WHEREAS, the Township has the need on a timely basis to purchase goods and services utilizing State contracts; and

WHEREAS, the Township intends to enter into contracts with Beyer Ford under State Contract A88214 for a 2022 F-450 Chassis DRW (F4H) XL 4WD Reg Cab 145" WB 60" CA, in the amount of \$65,388.50; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Financial Officer certifies that funding is available in the amount of \$65,388.50 from Line Item: 02-01-45-970-20

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, authorizes the Mayor to enter into a contract with Beyer Ford under State Contract A88214 for a 2022 F-450 Chassis DRW (F4H) XL 4WD Reg Cab 145" WB 60" CA, in the amount of \$65,388.50

RESOLUTION #22-137

A RESOLUTION RENEWING THE GROUP DENTAL BENEFITS PROGRAM FOR ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES AND THEIR COVERED DEPENDENTS THROUGH DELTA DENTAL OF NEW JERSEY, INC.

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon, hereinafter referred to as the Township, provides a dental benefits program for eligible Employees, Retirees and their covered dependents as part of the comprehensive Employee Health Benefits Program; and

WHEREAS, the Township’s Health Benefits Consultant, as a matter of due diligence, examined the plan usage, claims data and network utilization and further, engaged in active negotiations for the renewal of the Township’s Dental Program, administered by Delta Dental of NJ, Inc. and,

WHEREAS, the Consultant was successful through negotiation in securing a renewal, that:

12 – Month Renewal Offer		24 – Month Renewal Offer	
Initial Offer:	+ 5.09%	Initial Offer:	+ 8.09%
PIA Negotiated:	+ 3.09%	PIA Negotiated	+ 4.59%
Provides for all coverages/benefits to remain unchanged from the expiring for the Premier Plan.			

WHEREAS, the Consultant provided a Renewal Analysis and reviewed same with the Administrator and CMFO and it was agreed, the Township would be best served in securing the 24-month rate guarantee.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Mayor and Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, hereby authorize the Renewal of the dental benefits contract with Delta Dental of New Jersey for the period January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2023; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Governing Body does hereby authorize and affirm the implementation of this Renewal, which maintains the current plan design of benefits; thereby ensuring the moral and contractual obligations of the Township; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Mayor and Township Administrator are hereby authorized and directed to execute the renewal documents in accordance with the existing terms and conditions of the Agreement with the renewal rate provisions, as promulgated herewith; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, a certified copy of this Resolution shall be forwarded to PIA Security Programs, a Division of World Insurance Associates, LLC, 429 Hackensack Street, P.O. Box 818 Carlstadt NJ, Health Benefits Consultant to the Township, the Township Chief Financial Officer and Municipal Auditor.

RESOLUTION #22-138

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, 2022 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 2022, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 54:4-66-2;
2. That the entire estimated tax levy for CY 2022 is hereby set at \$78,904,929.76; 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 #22-139

RESOLUTION URGING THE SWIFT PASSAGE OF S-330/A3804, WHICH SHALL RESTORE THE ENERGY TAX RECEIPTS TO MUNICIPALITIES

WHEREAS, taxes on gas and electric utilities were originally collected by the host municipalities to be used for local purposes and to compensate the public for the use of their rights of way; and

WHEREAS, when the State made itself the collection agent for these taxes, it promised to dedicate the proceeds to municipal property tax relief; since, just as municipalities collect property taxes for the benefit of school districts, counties, and other entities, the State is supposed to collect Energy Taxes for the benefit of municipal governments: and

WHEREAS, for years, though, State budget makers have diverted funding from Energy Taxes to fund State programs; and instead of being spent on local programs and services and used to offset property taxes, the money has been spent as successive Legislatures and Administrations have seen fit; and

WHEREAS, the diversion of dedicated energy tax receipts to the State's General Fund further jeopardizes this critical property tax relief funding in future years; and

WHEREAS, by reducing Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Act (CMPTRA), which is also comprised of revenues that should be returned to municipalities, State Budget makers have been able to continue collecting Energy Taxes, while keeping additional revenue that should have been returned to provide property tax relief; and

WHEREAS, the cumulative impact of years of underfunding has left many municipalities with serious needs and burdensome property taxes; and

WHEREAS, local elected officials are in the best position to decide the best use of these resources, which were always intended to fund local programs and services; and

WHEREAS, Senator Singleton and Senate President Scutari have introduced legislation (S-330) that will restore, over a five-year period, Energy Tax Receipts to municipalities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Township Council of the Township of Vernon in the County of Sussex urges the Legislature to swiftly pass this legislation and Governor Murphy sign the

legislation prior to passage of the FY2023 State budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution is forwarded to State Senator Steven Oroho, State Assemblyman Parker Space, State Assemblyman Hal Wirths, Senate President Scutari, Assembly Speaker Coughlin, Governor Murphy, New Jersey League of Municipalities and all Sussex County municipalities.

Resolution #22-140: Approving a Charitable Solicitor's Permit: Pochuck Valley Fire Department, Inc.

Council President Rizzuto asked for to approve resolutions #22-140

MOVED: Michael Furrey

SECOND: Natalie Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Shortway, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN: Lynch

ABSENT:

Motion passed to approve resolutions #22-140

RESOLUTION #22-140

APPROVING A CHARITABLE SOLICITOR'S PERMIT: POCHUCK VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT INC.

WHEREAS, Pochuck Valley Fire Department, 13 Lake Wallkill Road, Sussex, NJ 07461, has made application for a Charitable Roadside Solicitor's Permit for the purposes of soliciting funds on May 20, 2022, July 2, 2022 and September 3, 2022 on County Route 565 at the intersection of Lake Wallkill Road; 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 Pochuck Valley Fire Department, 13 Lake Wallkill Road, Sussex, NJ 07461 on May 28, 2022, July 2, 2022 and September 3, 2022 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on County Route 565 at the intersection of Lake Wallkill Road as depicted on the attached map, 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.

INTRODUCTION/1ST READING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCES

Ordinance #22-12: Ordinance of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, Amending Chapter 5, Article X Entitled "Department of Public Works" to Create the Position of Assistant Director of Public Works

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #22-10

No motion was made. Ordinance fails.

PUBLIC HEARING/2ND READING OF ORDINANCE

Ordinance #22-09: Capital Ordinance Providing for Various Improvements by the Township of

Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, Appropriating Therefore the Sum of \$323,000.00 and Providing that Sum so Appropriated Shall be Raised from the Capital Improvement Fund of the Township

Council President Rizzuto read by title Ordinance #22-09

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to place Ordinance #22-09 on the floor.

MOVED: Michael Furrey
SECOND: Harry Shortway

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to place Ordinance #22-09 on the floor.

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open Public Hearing for Ordinance #22-09.

MOVED: Michael Furrey
SECOND: Natalie Buccieri

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to open the floor to the public.

Bill Diresta – Vernon Township, asked what the capital ordinance was being used for and why is it not listed on the ordinance.

Peg Distasi – Vernon Township, agrees with asking for details in capital ordinances.

CFO Bright gave a breakdown of the capital ordinance.

Seeing no one else wishing to come forward, Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close Public Hearing for Ordinance #22-09

MOVED: Brian Lynch
SECOND: Natalie Buccieri

All Members were in Favor.

A roll call vote was taken to adopt ordinance #22-09

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Shortway, Rizzuto
NAYES:
ABSTAIN: Lynch
ABSENT:

Motion passed to adopt Ordinance #22-09.

ORDINANCE #22-09

CAPITAL ORDINANCE

Capital Ordinance providing for various improvements by the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, appropriating therefore the sum of \$323,000.00 and providing that such sum so appropriated shall be raised from the Capital Improvement Fund of the Township

BE IT ORDAINED by the Governing Body of the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, that the following capital projects be hereby authorized but not limited to include acquisition and installation of equipment for the Department of Public Works, Police Department, Fire Department, and various improvements to Township properties; for a total Improvement Authorization of \$323,000.00.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the financing for the above projects be as follows:

General Capital Improvement Fund..... \$323,000.00

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the capital budget of the Township is hereby amended to conform with the provisions of this ordinance to the extent of any inconsistency herewith and the resolutions promulgated by the Local Finance Board showing all detail of the amended capital budget and capital improvement program as approved by the Director, Division of Local Government Services, are on file with the Township Clerk and are available for public inspection.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the period of usefulness of the capital projects are in excess of the five (5) year statutory requirement, and that no debt shall be incurred by the Township for this authorization. This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon final passage and publication as required by law.

Ordinance #22-10: Bond Ordinance Appropriating \$1,955,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$1,365,000 Bonds or Notes of the Township, for Various Improvements of Purposes Authorized to be Undertaken by the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey

Council President Rizzuto read by title Ordinance #22-10

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to place Ordinance #22-10 on the floor.

MOVED: Michael Furrey
SECOND: Harry Shortway

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open Public Hearing for Ordinance #22-10.

MOVED: Natalie Buccieri
SECOND: Harry Shortway

A roll call vote was taken to open to the public

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carried to open to the public.

Tom McClachrie – Vernon Township, feels that any increase over \$1,000,000 should be put to a vote by the residents.

Peg Distasi – Vernon Township, believes that the Council should only be necessary for the well being and safety of our community. Ms. Distasi asked if we should have our own 911 system rather than go through the County.

Council Member Lynch explained that the 911 system for the County is its own dispatch and Vernon has its own dispatch. He explained that every resident who has a cell phone pays a tax that goes toward the 911 dispatch for the County. Each resident in their property taxes pays a small amount to the County 911 dispatch. To secure the County dispatch, the town would have to pay on top of that. Being the largest town in Sussex County, we need to have our own dispatch center for our police and fire.

Bill Diresta – Vernon Township, feels that we should use the dispatch that is in town.

Seeing no one else wishing to come forward, Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close Public Hearing for Ordinance #22-10

MOVED: Harry Shortway
SECOND: Michael Furrey

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to close the floor to public comment.

A roll call vote was taken to adopt ordinance #22-10

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Shortway, Rizzuto
NAYES:
ABSTAIN: Lynch
ABSENT:

Motion passed to adopt Ordinance #22-10.

ORDINANCE #22-10

**BOND ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING \$1,955,000, AND
AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$1,365,000 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.**

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF
VERNON, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, NEW JERSEY** (not less than two-thirds of all the
members thereof affirmatively concurring), **AS FOLLOWS:**

The several improvements described in Section 3 of this bond ordinance are hereby respectively authorized as general improvements to be made or acquired by The Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey. For the said several improvements or purposes stated in said Section 3, there are hereby appropriated the respective sums of money therein stated as the appropriations made for said improvements or purposes, said sums being inclusive of all appropriations heretofore made therefor and amounting in the aggregate to \$1,955,000 including the aggregate sum of \$386,800, as the several down payments for said improvements or purposes required by law and more particularly described in said Section 3 and now available therefor by virtue of provision in a previously adopted budget or budgets of the Township for down payment or for capital improvement purposes and including also, in the case of the improvement or purpose described in paragraph (b) of said Section 3, the sum of \$203,200 received or expected to be received by the Township from the New Jersey Department of Transportation as a grant-in-aid of financing said improvement or purpose.

For the financing of said improvements or purposes and to meet the part of said \$1,955,000 appropriations not provided for by application hereunder of said down payments and grant, negotiable bonds of the Township are hereby authorized to be issued in the principal amount of \$1,365,000 pursuant to the Local Bond Law of New Jersey. In anticipation of the issuance of said bonds and to temporarily finance said improvements or purposes, negotiable notes of the Township in a principal amount not exceeding \$1,365,000 are hereby authorized to be issued pursuant to and within the limitations prescribed by said Local Bond Law.

The improvements hereby authorized and the several purposes for the financing of which said obligations are to be issued, the appropriation made for and estimated cost of each such purpose, and the estimated maximum amount of bonds or notes to be issued for each such purpose, are respectively as follows:

<u>IMPROVEMENT OR PURPOSE</u>	<u>APPROPRIATION AND ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>ESTIMATED MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF BONDS AND NOTES</u>
(a) Acquisition by purchase of new and additional equipment including, without limitation, one (1) loader, one (1) dingoe utility machine, basin cleaner retrofitting equipment and heavy machinery equipment for use by the Department of Public Works of the Township, and turnout gear and various equipment for use by the Fire Departments of the Township, together with all site work, attachments, accessories and equipment necessary therefor or incidental thereto, all as shown on and in accordance with the plans and specifications therefor on file or to be filed in the office of the Township Clerk and hereby approved	\$595,000	\$566,667
(b) Improvement of various streets in and by the Township by the construction or reconstruction therein of a roadway pavements at least equal in useful life or durability to a roadway pavement of Class B construction (as such term is used or referred to in Section 40A:2-22 of said Local Bond Law), together with all structures, appurtenances, milling, curb and sidewalk reconstruction, drainage improvements, guide rails, retaining walls, equipment, work and materials necessary therefor or incidental thereto, all as shown on and in accordance with the plans and specifications therefor on file or to be filed in the office of the Township Clerk and hereby approved, the \$975,000 appropriated therefor being inclusive of the sum of \$203,200 received or expected to be received by the Township from the New Jersey Department of Transportation as a grant-in-aid of financing said improvement	975,000	431,667
(c) Improvement of municipally-owned properties and facilities in and by the Township including, without limitation, Bell Field by the installation of new lighting, together with all equipment, structures, site work, work and materials necessary therefor or incidental thereto, all as shown on and in accordance with the plans and specifications therefor on file or to be filed in the office of the Township Clerk and hereby approved	190,000	180,952
(d) Improvement of the Police Department headquarters in and by the Township by the installation of a new 911 system, together with all equipment, structures, site work, work and materials necessary therefor or incidental thereto, all as shown on and in accordance with the plans and specifications therefor on file or to be filed in the office of the Township Clerk and hereby approved	<u>195,000</u>	<u>185,714</u>

Totals \$1,955,000 \$1,365,000

Except as otherwise stated in paragraph (b) above with respect to the said grant-in-aid for financing the improvement or purpose described in said paragraph (b), the excess of the appropriation made for each of the improvement or purpose aforesaid over the estimated maximum amount of bonds or notes to be issued therefor, as above stated, is the amount of the said down payment for said purpose.

The following additional matters are hereby determined, declared, recited and stated:

The said purposes described in Section 3 of this bond ordinance are not current expenses and each is a property or improvement which the Township may lawfully acquire or make as a general improvement, and no part of the cost thereof has been or shall be specially assessed on property specially benefited thereby.

The average period of usefulness of said purposes within the limitations of said Local Bond Law and taking into consideration the respective amounts of the said obligations authorized for the several purposes, according to the reasonable life thereof computed from the date of the said bonds authorized by this bond ordinance, is 12.73 years.

The supplemental debt statement required by said Local Bond Law has been duly made and filed in the office of the Township Clerk and a complete executed duplicate thereof has been filed in the office of the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs of the State of New Jersey, and such statement shows that the gross debt of the Township as defined in said Local Bond Law is increased by the authorization of the bonds and notes provided for in this bond ordinance by \$1,365,000, and the said obligations authorized by this bond ordinance will be within all debt limitations prescribed by said Local Bond Law.

Amounts not exceeding \$500,000 in the aggregate for interest on said obligations, costs of issuing said obligations, engineering costs and other items of expense listed in and permitted under Section 40A:2-20 of said Local Bond Law may be included as part of the costs of said improvements and are included in the foregoing estimate thereof.

The funds from time to time received by the Township on account of the \$203,200 grant referred to in Section 1 of this bond ordinance shall be used for financing the improvement or purpose described in Section 3(b) of this bond ordinance by application thereof either to direct payment of the cost of said improvement or purpose, or to payment or reduction of the authorization of the obligations of the Township authorized by this bond ordinance. Any such funds so received may, and all such funds so

received which are not required for direct payment of such cost shall, be held and applied by the Township as funds applicable only to the payment of obligations of the Township authorized by this bond ordinance.

All bond anticipation notes issued hereunder shall mature at such times as may be determined by the Chief Financial Officer, provided that no note shall mature later than one year from its date. The notes shall bear interest at such rate or rates and be in such form as may be determined by the Chief Financial Officer. The Chief Financial Officer shall determine all matters in connection with the notes issued pursuant to this bond ordinance, and the Chief Financial Officer's signature upon the notes shall be conclusive evidence as to all such determinations. All notes issued hereunder may be renewed from time to time subject to the provisions of Section 40A:2-8 of said Local Bond Law. The Chief Financial Officer is hereby authorized to sell part or all of the notes at no less than par from time to time at public or private sale and to deliver them to the purchasers thereof upon receipt of payment of the purchase price plus accrued interest from their dates to the dates of delivery thereof. The Chief Financial Officer is directed to report in writing to the governing body of the Township at the meeting next succeeding the date when any sale or delivery of the notes pursuant to this bond ordinance is made. Such report must include the principal amount, interest rate and maturities of the notes sold, the price obtained and the name of the purchaser.

The full faith and credit of the Township are hereby pledged to the punctual payment of the principal of and interest on the said obligations authorized by this bond ordinance. Said obligations shall be direct, unlimited obligations of the Township, and the Township shall be obligated to levy ad valorem taxes upon all the taxable property within the Township for the payment of said obligations and interest thereon without limitation of rate or amount.

The capital budget or temporary capital budget of the Township is hereby amended to conform with the provisions of this ordinance to the extent of any inconsistency herewith and the resolutions promulgated by the Local Finance Board showing all detail of the amended capital budget or temporary capital budget and capital program as approved by the Director, Division of Local Government Services, are on file with the Township Clerk and are available for public inspection.

This bond ordinance shall take effect twenty (20) days after the first publication thereof after final adoption, as provided by said Local Bond Law.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

MOVED: Brian Lynch

SECOND: Natalie Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion passed to open the floor for public comment.

Carl Contino – Vernon Township, submitted a petition to raise the Pride Flag at the municipal building and submit a proclamation for the month of June.

JoAnn Floridaia – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Petra S Krause – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Derrek Knupp – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Sally Goodson – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Bridget Esposito – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Zoe Heath – Hamburg, SC Pride, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Rev. Peggy Ludlow – Pastor Holy Lutheran Church, Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Camila Diresta – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Lynn Ludlow – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Cathy McCarthy – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Peg Distasi – Vernon Township, feels that the unnecessary spending needs to stop before we head into a financial disaster. Ms. Distasi feels that the Council has the right to ask questions and get answers.

Mark Hefter – Vernon Township, is disappointed that resolution #22-130 passed tonight.

Bill Diresta – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

Jen Lubliner -Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building. Questioned the status of the social media policy that was presented by the Economic Development Advisory Committee.

Annie Lakes – Vernon Township, is worried about the security on the beach in Highland Lakes.

The Council advised her to contact the police department.

Ann Larson – Vernon Township, mentioned that we have not heard an answer about the cellular and WIFI problems as of now. Ms. Larson feels that Council President Rizzuto did not demand answers from the Mayor but he did ask respectively for answers. Ms. Larson is concerned that the line in the budget for road repairs will be going towards Black Creek Drive and not the rest of the roads that need repair. She asked if the Mayor could contact someone to take care of the trees leaning on wires on Route 515. Ms. Larson does not understand the big push to fly the Pride Flag.

Council Member Lynch explained that the lower wires on the poles are cable wires. The electric company will not touch the cable wires or the poles that the cable is on.

Brant Shih – Vernon Township, is in support of the Pride Flag at the municipal building.

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

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

MOVED: Brian Lynch

SECOND: Natalie Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, Furrey, Lynch, Shortway, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion passed to close the floor for public comment.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Shortway commented that he heard the issues regarding the Pride Flag and he recommended putting up a second flag pole to fly this flag and we should also have a resolution of support.

Council Member Furrey reiterated Council Member Shortway's comments and he feels that this is reasonable. He was impressed with everyone who spoke tonight particularly the eighth grader.

Council Member Furrey gave an update on the water project in Town Center saying that it is moving very quickly. He asked the Mayor for an update and also explained that we are working on an agreement with Veolia formally Suez. Council Member Furrey contacted the DEP in regards to pump station #2. The DEP is close to the final approval and they are ready to go out to bid to start the project. Council Member Furrey had a discussion with CFO Bright about the sewer service area and that project is nearly complete and there has been a lot of progress with the DEP.

Council Member Furrey thanked the Mayor for the update on the pump track and the trail. He is happy it is moving forward and he feels that this is part of an economic plan to bring business into town center. He hopes that others on the Council would support this project.

Council Member Furrey spoke about Kevin Mitchell saying that he was a true pillar of the community and a kind soul. He did so much for the township and he is glad we honored him tonight.

Council Member Lynch said he listed to everyone speak tonight about the LGBT flag and he feels somewhat insulted. Some speakers spoke eloquently and other spoke accusingly saying that we do not have open minds and that there are no other opinions allowed except yours. Council Member Lynch was in favor of having a resolution for gay pride month in June. He feels that as far as a flag, we have a flag that represents every single person in this room, good or bad. We are all united under one flag and we all pledge allegiance to that flag at the start of every meeting. Council Member Lynch does not see the idea of billboard a certain group of people as opposed to all of the people. He understands the trials and tribulations but because he does not want to fly a flag does not make him less sympathetic.

Council Vice President Buccieri asked if we can consider having a social media policy on the next agenda as a discussion item.

Council Member Buccieri appreciates that we live in a country where we can come before our government to share our opinions and make requests. She respects and appreciates every comment the Council hears although she may not always agree with the comments or is able to give everyone what they ask for. Council Member Buccieri agrees with Council Member Lynch that we are blessed and fortunate to live in a country that has one flag that represents us all.

Council Member Buccieri said that as we approach Memorial Day weekend, she wanted to recognize all of the families of Vernon who have lost a loved one while serving in the Armed Forces. As a town, a community and a country we can never express how grateful we are to those who willingly laid down their lives so we can be free. There is a cemetery in our town, The Glenwood Cemetery, and if you chose to walk in there, she is sure you would find many flags and medallions for different branches of the armed service representing community members who have died while serving our country. Many moms, dads,

siblings and children have stood along the graveside seeing their loved one's caskets draped in the United States flag. Our flag represents so much, freedom, equality and protection. In that moment seeing it carefully folded and presented to a grieving family, it represents the most heartfelt appreciation of a grateful nation. So, as we enjoy a long weekend, I hope all of us will remember the most ultimate sacrifice so many have made for our freedom. And remember the families too who are grieving and for who Memorial Day will always be a proud but heartbreaking reminder of their loss.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Council President Rizzuto explained that the question was raised why this was not out on the agenda. He does not believe tradition requires a vote. Our flag enjoys its singular preeminence by virtue of the lives that have given the ultimate sacrifice that has been named for our country under this flag. Council President Rizzuto said that sacrifice guaranteed all of our freedom. To put another flag in his opinion, would cheapen our flag. An alternative was given by Council Member Shortway to the Mayor, but the Mayor indicated that he would not do anything without Council support. Council President Rizzuto feels that only the American flag and the P.O.W. flag should be flown at the municipal building. Flying a flag does not give your rights, your actions do not give you rights. Your citizenship of this great country under the flag, red white and blue, stars and stripes guarantees your rights under the constitution. For you to ask, or any group to ask for inclusion for a separate means of identity on the standing, Council President Rizzuto thinks this does not give pause to the sacrifices that were made by so many in our past wars. Council President Rizzuto does not feel he wants to spend the money on a second flag pole.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:10 Council Member Buccieri made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member Lynch.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR
Municipal Clerk

Patrick Rizzuto,
Council President

Minutes approved: June 13, 2022