VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MAY 29, 2025 7:00 PM

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on May 29, 2025, in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Council President Rizzuto presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

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

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Council President Rizzuto led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

ROLL CALL

Present were Council Members, Jessica DeBenedetto, William Higgins, Bradley Sparta and Council President Patrick Rizzuto. Also present were Mayor Anthony Rossi, Township Attorney Peter King and Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio.

Council Member Buccieri was not present.

PRESENTATION

Jack Edward Schmick

MAYOR COMMENTS

The work done by the Beautification Committee in TC has been commendable.

Last week, I attended the Mayor's Conference in AC, where I had the opportunity to meet many other mayors and collaborate on ideas and issues. I also observed the NJ governor candidate forum, which featured Republican candidates Senator Brenick, Jack Ciattarelli, and Bill Spadia, as well as Democrat candidate Steve Sweeney. Some of the major topics discussed included the affordable housing mandate, which many agree is making it more difficult for developers to build. Another significant topic was bail reform. If you're unfamiliar with it, it would be beneficial to research this issue; it seems the only candidate in favor of continuing the current bail reform is Steve Sweeney.

Work has commenced on the water expansion project to support all the new developments. I have met with One Key and Cory our engineer to review the project to ensure there are no issues with obtaining their Certificates of Occupancy (CO). One Key is on track for its grand opening at the end of August or in September. During the last Land Use Board (LUB) meeting, One Key presented their 27-unit building project and hopes to submit its final plans at the next LUB meeting.

Additionally, during that meeting, Sussex Cultivation requested a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) so they can begin growing cannabis, having waited nearly 18 months for DEP approval.

I have also met with Brian Lynch, Chief Young, and Kevin Duffy to discuss the design of the First Responders Memorial. I will try to share a copy of this rendering with the public soon.

On Sunday, May 25th, our Vernon Police Department's union 285 held a car wash to support the Senior Olympics, raising a total of \$1,000.

For those who may not be aware, I have immense respect for our military servicemen and women. With that in mind, I plan to read and sign a proclamation that will be displayed in our lobby.

Lastly, Monday was Memorial Day. Despite it being a solemn day for our country, the weather was beautiful. The local "Hometown Heroes" banners added to the beauty of the day; seeing them during the parade truly took my breath away. We have placed an order for 20 more banners, which will arrive next week, and I hope we won't run out of poles to display them. I want to extend my gratitude to everyone who participated.

The list of organizations involved is as follows:

- VFW

Chamber of Commerce

Girl Scouts

Boy Scouts

Zeigler Dance

Vernon Valley Karate

Vernon Township High School Marching Band

Vernon Township Little League Baseball

I have always said we can never do enough for our veterans, which is why yesterday I met with the county commissioners and one of the objectives I discussed with Director Carney was to designate a parking spot at our municipal building and other public parking areas for our Gold Star families. This objective is being launched across the county and being that Vernon township is the largest municipality in the county we lead by example.

When I ran for office, I said I had no pet projects, which was true, however I now have one. My goal is to re develop veteran's park. The DPW has done a great job trying to maintain what we currently have, but it's time for a refresher. Im hoping to have this all done with donations, if not this will make for a worthy capital improvements project. This Veterans memorial section will be a place where our Veterans, family or for someone to be able to sit and reflect and honor all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. I have asked James Raperto, Craig aka Digger who are Marines to help provide their input. I have also asked for members of the VFW to help as well and they are all completely onboard.

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

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

MOVED: DeBenedetto SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor.

Jenny Rottinger – spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Sue Woodell – spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Kathy Zayatz – a member of the Senior Advisory Board, spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Nick Zayatz – spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Lori – from the Flower Shop in Vernon, spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Elenor Campbell – spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Paul Marsh – spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Frank Macherone – spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Gloria Frator- spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

Mishelle Downtain - Vernon Recreation Director, answered questions the Council had.

Sue Woodell – spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

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

MOVED: Sparta SECOND: DeBenedetto

All members were in favor.

REVIEW OF BILLS LIST

The Council reviewed the bills list.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 12, 2025 - Executive Session

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the May 12, 2025 executive session minutes.

MOVED: Sparta SECOND: Higgins

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN: DeBenedetto ABSENT: Buccieri

Motion carries to approve May 12, 2025 executive session minutes.

May 12, 2025 - Regular Meeting

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the May 12, 2025 regular meeting minutes with corrections.

MOVED: Sparta SECOND: Higgins

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN: DeBenedetto ABSENT: Buccieri

Motion carries to approve May 12, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution #25-146: Authorizing Issuance of Estimated Tax Bills

<u>Resolution #25-147:</u> Township of Vernon NJ Department of Community Affairs LEAP Implementation Grant Resolution FY25

<u>Resolution #25-148:</u> Resolution Authorizing the Use of Govdeals Auction Services Through Sourcewell National Cooperative #111424-GDI.

Resolution #25-149: Refund Overpayment (Block 341 Lot 8 – Morris)

Resolution #25-150: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 526 Lot 346 (Culmone)

Resolution #25-151: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 458 Lot 53 (VonEssen)

Resolution #25-152: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 153 Lot 6 (Corelogic)

Resolution #25-153: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 153 Lot 6 (Corelogic)

Resolution #25-154: Approving a Solicitor Permit – Trinty Solar, LLC

Resolution #25-155: Resolution of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, Authorizing the Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding Between the Vernon Township Police Department and Atlantic Health System, Newton Medical Center, to Establish Joint Participation in the Arrive Together Program to Enhance and Support Response to Certain Behavioral Health Crisis Calls

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

MOVED: Sparta SECOND: Higgins

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: DeBenedetto, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES: ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Buccieri

Motion carries to approve the consent.

RESOLUTION #25-146

AUTHORIZING ISSUANCE OF ESTIMATED TAX BILLS

WHEREAS, the 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, 2025 unless third quarter revenue is received on time; and

WHEREAS, the and Council further finds and declares that the Chief Financial Officer, Donelle Bright, has 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 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 2025, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 54:4-66-2;
- 2. That the entire estimated tax levy for CY 2025 is hereby set at \$83,833,576.28; 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 #25-147

TOWNSHIP OF VERNON NJ DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEAP IMPLEMENTATION GRANT RESOLUTION FY25

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has appropriated \$6 million for Shared Services and Implementation, Challenge, and County Coordinator Grants to assist local units with the study, development, and implementation of new shared and regional services; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) administers the LEAP grant program; and

WHEREAS, LEAP Implementation Grants exist to support costs associated with shared service implementation to ensure that meaningful, efficiency generating initiatives are not hindered by short term transitional expenses; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon, the Township of Lafayette, the Township of Hardyston, the Borough of Hamburg, the Borough of Franklin, the Township of Montague, and the Borough of Ogdensburg have entered into shared services agreements, but face certain expenses associated with implementation that present a burden to the local units; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of these shared services agreements is to provide animal control services, which involve providing temporary housing for animals collected in the course of the agreement;

WHEREAS, it is ideal to have a quarantine unit for newly retrieved animals to mitigate any spread of communicable diseases within the shelter population, this agreement would allow for the construction of new quarantine units in the Vernon Animal Shelter, which will benefit the residents of all participating local units; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon has agreed to be the lead agency in this program and will submit the application to DLGS on behalf of all participating units; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council that Township of Vernon will apply for a LEAP Implementation Grant in the amount of \$213,750 to support implementation of this shared service on behalf of itself, and on behalf of the Township of Lafayette, the Township of Hardyston, the Borough of Hamburg, the Borough of Franklin, the Township of Montague, and the Borough of Ogdensburg, and if awarded and upon execution of said Agreement, the Township of Vernon does accept the Terms and Conditions specified in the Agreement in connection to this grant award.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council that the Mayor, Administrator, Chief Financial Officer, Chief of Police and Sgt. Ronald Koumaras are authorized to sign any and all paperwork associated with the LEAP Implementation grant application and all award and execution documentation as is necessary.

RESOLUTION #148

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE USE OF GOVDEALS AUCTION SERVICES THROUGH SOURCEWELL NATIONAL COOPERATIVE #111424-GDI.

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

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

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon has the need to provide for public auction services of its surplus equipment in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-36 and to procure services in accordance with the Local Publics Contract Law N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et. Seq., and;

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

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

WHEREAS the equipment and corresponding Sourcewell National Cooperative contract is #111424-GDI for Govdeals; and

WHEREAS there is no cost for the Township under the Sourcewell National Cooperative.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT; the Mayor is hereby authorized to effectuate an agreement with Govdeals through Sourcewell contract #111424-GDI

RESOLUTION #25-149

REFUND OVERPAYMENT (Block 341 Lot 8 – Morris)

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Christina Morris in the amount of \$2838.26 representing refund for overpayment of 4th qtr. 2024 property taxes for Block 341 Lot 8.

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Morris	341	8	\$2838.26
		TOTAL:	\$2838.26

RESOLUTION #25-150

REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN (Block 526 Lot 346 (Culmone)

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

awarded Michael Culmone a 100% permanent and totally disabled veteran: and,

WHEREAS, the law exempts said property from taxation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Tax Collector to refund 2025 property tax in the amount of \$2,506.91 to Michael Culmone.

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

RESOLUTION #25-151

REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN (Block 458 Lot 53 (VonEssen)

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Awarded Matthew VonEssen a 100% permanent and totally disabled veteran: and,

WHEREAS, the law exempts said property from taxation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Tax Collector to refund 2025 property tax in the amount of \$1,410.29 to Matthew VonEssen.

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

RESOLUTION #25-152

REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN (Block 153 Lot 6 (Corelogic)

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

awarded Taylor Wagner a 100% permanent and totally disabled veteran: and,

WHEREAS, the law exempts said property from taxation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Tax Collector to refund 2024 property tax in the amount of \$5,159.01 to Corelogic.

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

RESOLUTION #25-153

REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN (Block 153 Lot 6 (Corelogic)

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

awarded Taylor Wagner a 100% permanent and totally disabled veteran: and,

WHEREAS, the law exempts said property from taxation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby authorizes the Tax Collector to refund 2025 property tax in the amount of \$2,560.00 to Corelogic.

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

RESOLUTION #25-154

APPROVING A SOLICITOR PERMIT – Trinty Solar, LLC

WHEREAS, Peyton Robertson has made an application for a Solicitor Permit for the purpose of fiber optic internet service; and

WHEREAS, upon receipt of the application for a Solicitor Permit, by Peyton Robertson of Trinty Solar, LLC the Vernon Township Police Department investigated the applicant's moral character and found it to be

satisfactory and in good order for the protection of the public good; and the necessary application has been filed and all documentation is in order;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that approval be granted for a Solicitor Permit for Peyton Robertson.

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

RESOLUTION #25-155

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE VERNON TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT AND ATLANTIC HEALTH SYSTEM, NEWTON MEDICAL CENTER, TO ESTABLISH JOINT PARTICIPATION IN THE ARRIVE TOGETHER PROGRAM TO ENHANCE AND SUPPORT RESPONSE TO CERTAIN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS CALLS

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Council of the Township of Vernon have received from the Vernon Township Chief of Police a Memorandum of Understanding to establish joint participation in the ARRIVE Together Program to enhance and support responses to certain behavioral health crisis calls; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor, Township Council and the Vernon Township Chief of Police have reviewed the terms of the MOU; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Council, together with the Chief of Police find it to be in the best interest of Vernon Township and its residents to execute the MOU.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by Mayor and Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, that the Vernon Township Police Chief be authorized to execute the Memorandum of Understanding between the Township and Atlantic Health System, Newton Medical Center (Participating Mental Health Service Provider) to establish a joint participation in the ARRIVE Together Program to enhance and support response to certain behavioral health crisis calls.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall take effective immediately.

RESOLUTION

Resolution #25-156: Sidebar Agreement Between the Township of Vernon and U.A.W. Local

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-156.

MOVED: Sparta SECOND: Higgins

Council Member Sparta made a motion to table resolution #25-156, seconded by Council Member DeBenedetto.

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: DeBenedetto, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES: ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Buccieri

Motion carries to table resolution #25-156.

ORDINANCES TO INTRODUCE

<u>Ordinance #25-08:</u> Ordinance of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, Amending Chapter 94 of the Code of the Township of Vernon Regarding the Police Division

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #25-08.

MOVED: Sparta

SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: DeBenedetto, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES: ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Buccieri

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #25-08.

PUBLIC HEARING/ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES

<u>Ordinance #25-06:</u> Bond Ordinance Appropriating \$3,492,500, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$2,550,000 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

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open the floor for public hearing on ordinance #25-06.

MOVED: DeBenedetto SECOND: Sparta

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the floor to the public for public hearing of ordinance #25-06.

Seeing no one from the public wishing to come forward, President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close the public hearing on ordinance #25-06.

MOVED: DeBenedetto SECOND: Sparta

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the floor for public comment.

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to adopt ordinance #25-06.

MOVED: Sparta SECOND: Higgins

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: DeBenedetto, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES: Higgins ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Buccieri

Motion does not carry to adopt ordinance #25-06.

Ordinance #25-07: Capital Ordinance Providing for Various Improvements by the Township of Vernon in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, Appropriating Therefore the Sum of \$265,000.00 and providing that such Sum so Appropriated Shall Be Raised from the Capital Improvement Fund of the Township

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open the floor for public hearing on ordinance #25-07.

MOVED: Sparta SECOND: DeBenedetto

All members were in favor

Motion carries to open the floor to the public for public hearing of ordinance #25-07.

Seeing no one from the public wishing to come forward, President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close the public hearing on ordinance #25-07.

MOVED: DeBenedetto SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor.

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to adopt ordinance #25-07.

MOVED: Sparta

SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: DeBenedetto, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES: ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Buccieri

Motion carries to adopt ordinance #25-07.

ORDINANCE #25-07

CAPITAL ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR VARIOUS IMPROVEMENTS BY THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, NEW JERSEY, APPROPRIATING THEREFORE THE SUM OF \$265,000.00 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 and improvements for the Fire Department, Police Department and the Maintenance of Parks; for a total Improvement Authorization of \$265,000.00.

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

General Capital Improvement Fund

\$265,000.00

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 Borough for this authorization. This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon final passage and publication as required by law.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to 5 Minutes Per Person)

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

MOVED: Sparta SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the floor to the public.

Jane Damstra – questioned the Council for not permitting her to join the union.

Sue Woodell - spoke in support of allowing Jane into the union.

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

MOVED: DeBenedetto SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the floor to public comments.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Higgins feels that the Council covered a lot tonight and he is satisfied.

Council Member DeBenedetto had no comments.

Council Member Sparta thanked the VFW for putting together the Memorial Day parade. It was great day and great to see so many people attending. Council Member Sparta questioned when the Council would see a resolution on the agenda regarding Legions.

Council President Rizzuto explained that the judge gave them thirty days to clear up any issues with the liquor license.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Council President Rizzuto reminded everyone that the Great Gorge Golf Resort One Club is having a ribbon cutting tomorrow at 11:00 am. President Rizzuto was very impressed with the Memorial Day parade as well. He thanks those who were here for the Veterans and also the Veterans lost their lives in combat.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:07 pm Council Member Higgins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member DeBenedetto.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR Municipal Clerk

Patrick Rizzuto
Council President

Minutes approved: June 23, 2025