

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
AUGUST 8, 2023 7:00 P.M.**

This Special Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on August 8, 2023 via Zoom Webinar and in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Council Vice President Buccieri presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate Notice of this Special Meeting was provided to the public and the press on August 3, 2023 and was posted at the Municipal Building in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A.10:4-7. The purpose of the Special Meeting Session is to have the public hearing and adoption of Ordinance #23-17.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

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

ROLL CALL

Present were Council Members Peg Distasi, Patrick Rizzuto, Bradley Sparta and Council President Buccieri. Also present were Mayor Howard Burrell, Business Administrator Tina Kraus, CFO, Donelle Bright, Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio and Township Attorney Josh Zielinski.

Council Member Tadrack was not present.

PUBLIC HEARING/2ND READING OF ORDINANCE

Ordinance #23-17: Establishing a Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) for the Volunteers of The Vernon Township Fire Departments and Emergency Medical Services

President Buccieri asked for a motion to open the floor for public hearing on ordinance #23-17.

MOVED: Distasi

SECOND: Sparta

All members were in favor.

Harry Shortway – is in favor of the LOSAP program and feels that this is long overdue.

Seeing no one else from the public wishing to come forward, President Buccieri asked for a motion to close the public hearing on ordinance #23-17.

MOVED: Distasi

SECOND: Sparta

All members were in favor.

President Buccieri asked for a motion to approve ordinance #23-17.

MOVED: Rizzuto

SECOND: Distasi

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Distasi, Rizzuto, Sparta, Buccieri

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Tadrack

Motion carries to approve ordinance #23-17.

ORDINANCE 23-17

**ESTABLISHING A LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARD
PROGRAM (LOSAP) FOR THE VOLUNTEERS OF THE TOWNSHIP
OF VERNON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon deems it appropriate and necessary to act to ensure retention of existing members and to provide incentives for recruiting new volunteer Firefighters/Emergency Medical Services organization members; and;

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon has determined that the creation of a Length of Service Award Program will enhance the ability of the Township to recruit and retain volunteer Firefighters/Emergency Medical Services organization members;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED, by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex that:

1. A Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) is herewith in accordance with Chapter 388 of the Laws of 1997, to reward members of the volunteer firefighting/first aid organizations for their loyal, diligent, and devoted services to the residents of the Township of Vernon.
2. The LOSAP shall provide for fixed annual contributions to a deferred income account for each volunteer member that meets the criteria set forth below; that such contributions shall be made in accordance with a plan that shall be established by the Township of Vernon pursuant to P.L. 1997, c. 388; and that such plan shall be administered in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey, the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and this ordinance.
3. The LOSAP shall provide for annual contributions to each eligible member that meets the criteria as per the attached schedules.
4. The estimated cost of the program has been calculated as follows:
 - a. For regular annual services: \$75,000.00 per year for the Fire Departments.
 - b. For regular annual services: \$45,000.00 per year for the Emergency Medical Services Departments
6. Each active volunteer member shall be credited with points for volunteer services provided to the volunteer Fire/Emergency Medical Services organization in accordance with the attached schedules.
7. That this ordinance shall not take effect unless it is approved by voters as a public question at the next general election.
8. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7 (d), the Township Council of the Township of Vernon hereby requests the Sussex County Clerk to print on the official ballot to be used in the General Election to be held on November 7, 2023 the following public question:
“Should the Township of Vernon provide a monetary Length of Service Award Program for volunteer fire departments and volunteer emergency medical services organization members on an annual basis as a tool for recruitment and retention of volunteers?”
Yes [] No []
9. The Sussex County Clerk is further requested to print on said ballot the following interpretive statement of the public question presented above:
If passed by the voters, this referendum will approve the provision of a Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) for volunteers with the Vernon Township Fire Suppression Division and the Emergency Medical Services Division. If passed by the voters, additional monetary provisions to the Township Annual Budget will be added for this annual award based on a point system for call responses, training, fundraising, recruitment, community services, specified prior years of service, etc.... The maximum annual contribution per volunteer will not exceed more than \$1150.00 or the maximum amount legally permitted by the State of New Jersey. Copies of the proposed program documents are available for public view at the Vernon Township location of the Sussex County Public Library, as well as the Township Clerk’s office located at 21 Church Street, Vernon, NJ 07462.
10. A certified copy of this Ordinance upon passage shall be immediately forwarded to the Sussex County Clerk.
11. A certified copy of this Ordinance shall be filed with the Division within 30 days of the date of the referendum.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Limited to 5 Minutes On Any Topic)

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

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Distasi

All members were in favor.

Jessica Paladini – feels that Council Member Distasi made a defamatory statement.

Thomas Dyke – thanked the Mayor and Council for approving the LOSAP ordinance and he hopes that the public will approve it.

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

MOVED: Rizzuto

SECOND: Sparta

All members were in favor.

MAYORS COMMENTS

I informed the Council and the public that as the result of meetings and discussions that I have personally had with Governor Murphy and our State Senator Steve Oroho about the Joe Wallace created illegal landfill, Vernon Township had been successful in obtaining a 100K\$ grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs for the purpose of hiring an Environmental Consultant to conduct samplings of the soil in this illegal landfill. I advised that the municipality would use this 100K\$ grant to hire an Environmental Consultant to determine if the contaminated soil in this illegal landfill was also hazards. Under the contract with the municipality, the Consultant would first conduct Preliminary Hand Auger Soil Samplings at three strategic sites of the total 14 planned sampling sites, and then test those samples for hazards materials. The Environmental Consultant would follow this Preliminary Hand Auger Soil Sampling and testing with Deep Test Pit Samplings at all 14 of the planned sampling sites. At that same meeting, at my request, the Council passed Resolution # 23-126 giving me the authorization to sign a contract with Dewberry Engineers to perform this necessary work. Dewberry Engineers have completed their Preliminary Hand Auger Samplings of contaminated materials found at the near surface levels of the three strategic sites. They are now proceeding to conduct backhoe dug Deep Sampling Test Pits at all 14 planned sampling sites. The testing of contaminated materials from the very shallow Preliminary Hand Auger Soil Samplings at the three strategic sites revealed no chemicals or other materials that are considered to be hazardous. If the results of tests of other contaminated materials from the Deep Test Pit Samples are consistent with the results of tests of the three shallow Preliminary Hand Auger Samples - - that is, if these tests also reveal no chemicals or other materials that are considered to be hazardous - - then the contaminated material on this site can be possibly disposed of at a facility such as the Sussex County Landfill. However, that is a determination which will not be made until the full soil investigation is complete, and all samples are tested and analyzed. While the price of this cleanup will without a doubt be very costly, the price will be lessened if no hazardous materials are found at this site. However, no matter what the content of this contaminated soil is finally determined to be, if the cost of this cleanup is to be placed on the backs of Vernon taxpayers, it will still be a significant financial burden. Therefore, I am still firmly committed to my ongoing focus of following through on two key efforts: 1. Working close with the New Jersey Attorney General's Office and the Honorable James Rothschild, the retired Superior Court Judge who has been appointed receiver of Mr. Wallace's estate, to locate any Wallace funds that could be used to pay for this cleanup; and ... 2. Working close with the Office of the Governor and our State Senator Steve Oroho to obtain additional state grants; and working close with our Congressional Representative Josh Gottheimer to obtain federal grants, in order to prevent local Vernon taxpayers from having to foot the bill for this cleanup. My commitment remains strong to doing everything that I can to cost effectively and efficiently clean up this environmental scar that Joe Wallace has inflicted on the face of our beautiful town!

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Sparta thanked Business Administrator Kraus for fixing the speaker system.

Council Member Distasi thanked the Mayor for following up on the Silver Spruce contamination. She is sure that when the deep bore testing is done, they will find the chemicals.

Council Member Rizzuto had no comments.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Council President Buccieri had no comments.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:15 pm Council Member Rizzuto made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member Sparta.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR
Municipal Clerk

Natalie Buccieri
Council President

Minutes approved: August 28, 2023