

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**January 31, 2008**

The Special Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:06 p.m. in the Vernon Municipal Center, Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Mayor Austin Carew presiding. There were 71 interested persons in attendance.

**STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE**

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the public and the press by delivering to the press and posting at the Municipal Building pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. The purpose of this meeting is a planning session of Council goals. Also there will be a Health presentation and discussion of the Health Department consolidation with the County.

**ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS**

The roll call of members was called and Richard Carson, Neil Desmond, Glenn McLaughlin, and Austin Carew answered the call. Also present were Melinda Carlton, Township Manager and Michael Witt, Township Attorney. Let it be noted that James Oroho arrived at 8:15 p.m. and Glenn McLaughlin left the meeting at 9:56 p.m.

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

The Mayor led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT CONSOLIDATION WITH THE COUNTY**

Austin Carew said Vernon's Health Director, Gene Osias, retired in January. Governor Corzine asked that all municipalities look into and consider consolidating their services with other towns or the county. The township is looking into different avenues as to whether it would be a cost savings by hiring another Health Director, share services with the county, or contract a Health Director. At this time, the council has not made any decisions.

Emrick Seabold, Herbert Yardley, and Kristin Brown, County Health Department Representatives, gave a presentation on sharing of services between Vernon Township and the Sussex County Health Department.

Mr. Yardley stated he has been in the Health Department business for over 30 years. He said that Hopatcong and Vernon are the only two towns who have not consolidated with the County. At this time, Messrs. Yardley and Seabold gave a video presentation to the types of services the county has to offer. These services include Public Health Nursing, an office of Environmental Health, health inspections, emergency preparedness, HAZ-MAT, mosquito control, an office of Weights and Measures, and office of Medical Examiner. In addition, the county offers courses in early intervention for children who have a childbirth developmental delay. This program is available to any family in Sussex County who has a child from birth to age 3 with developmental delays. Case Management is available to any family in Sussex County who has a child under the age of 22 with special health needs. New Jersey has made a commitment to assist families caring for children with complex, long-term medical and developmental disabilities. For these special needs children, prompt attention to their condition early in life helps assure they will lead healthier lives when they are older. He said the county welcomes any organization or group interested in helping to get information out to the public on cancer screening. Currently, the county has eight sanitarians, including one principal sanitarian, one senior sanitarian, and three chief sanitarians registered as Health

Inspectors. There are 22 municipalities in the county where the majority of the homes and commercial businesses are on septic systems. The turnaround time to issue new construction permits would be 7 days assuming the contractor submits an overall plan from an engineer. Alteration permits are issued within 5 days. A contractor submitting a completed application for missing baffles or something similar of that nature could obtain a permit the next day. Solid waste control goes back to nuisance control in cases where junk and garbage is found on the side of the road. These issues can be reported to the county.

Kristin Brown is the Health Educator for the Emergency Preparedness Program (EPP), which she has been in Sussex County since 2001. The Division of Health maintains a full-time Public Health Emergency Preparedness staff, funded by the federal government through a Core Capacity for Bioterrorism Preparedness grant. This team is dedicated to enhancing the county's preparedness in the event of a public health emergency. The Division of Health participates in local and statewide drills and exercises designed to test, evaluate and enhance our ability to protect the public in the event of a health emergency or terrorist attack. She said communications is the key to respond to an emergency. The EPP strive to work onsite in collaboration with the Vernon, Sparta, and Hopatcong Township Health Departments; Newton Memorial Hospital; St. Clare's Health Services; Sussex County Office of Emergency Management; Sussex County Law Enforcement; and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services. The goal is to come to learn what their resources are.

Mr. Yardley spoke a bit about the county's approach to controlling the mosquito population. He added that areas that contain standing bodies of water such as swamps, wetlands or lakes are excellent breeding habitats for mosquitoes.

The Sussex County HAZ-MAT team, consisting of 20+/- part-time trained volunteers, is available to respond to environmental and public health emergencies 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They have state-of-the-art equipment to assist in an emergency.

Mayor Carew asked if the county could provide further information to septic systems that are not standard, and how long would it take to travel from Newton to Vernon. Mr. Yardley said the county provides the service, but if Vernon has a policy for the public to follow in replacing septic systems then it would be no problem for the county to continue with it. The county will have to further investigate the distance. Currently, they work in Hardyston, Ogdensburg, and Sparta but they could open an office in Vernon. Mr. Seabold suggested that the contractor provide 24-hour notice or call early in the morning, if possible, for a septic system inspection. Mr. Yardley said individuals would go to their municipal complex to obtain the permits. Mr. McLaughlin asked if the sanitarian inspectors are rotated for different territories, and Herbert Yardley said the every two years. Mr. McLaughlin asked what the time frame is to get a septic permit, and Mr. Seabold said it's 10 days for new construction. Mr. Carson asked if the county has a central data base for emergency responders in the event of mass casualty; and secondly, if it has a relationship with local hospitals and any proactive services. Mr. Seabold said there is a links communication system, which reaches out to doctors, nurses, police departments, and EMS. The Public Health Nursing Department reaches out to area hospitals and other services to provide information on upcoming programs (i.e. cancer screening). Neil Desmond said residents, contractors, and real estate agents could have technical questions answered at the Vernon Board of Health. He asked how these citizens would receive the same response if the Vernon Health Department goes to the county. Mr. Yardley said Vernon would need a health inspector available. Mr. Desmond asked what programs are not available for Vernon residents, and Mr. Yardley said the Environmental and Public Health Nursing departments. Neil Desmond read into record *that the township would retain all Animal Control functions and would place these under the jurisdictions of Police at no added cost.* He asked if the Police Department would be handling Animal Control. Melinda Carlton said Animal Control is virtually self-sufficient, self-sustaining, and self-supervising. At this time, the Council addressed their numerous questions to the county representatives.

**OPEN THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC**

At this time, 8:18 p.m., the Mayor opened the meeting to the public for any questions and/or comments.

Jeff Careaga, Careaga Engineering, Inc. – Spoke about the differences in the fees charged between Vernon Township and Sussex County.

Linda Kroeger-Wilson – Vernon realtor – She asked what about the presence of a secretary, and where all the files would be kept if our Health Department moved to the County. She also had concerns about having to drive to Newton to get information.

Tom McClachrie – Vernon Taxpayers Association – He asked how much did Sparta save by moving their Health Department to the county, and exact figures were not available. The Township Manager said the projected cost savings would be \$300,000. per year.

Lori Wilt – Vernon school nurse – She read, and handed out, a letter to the council in support of Vernon Township’s Public Health Nurse – Maureen Cianci.

Bruce Zaretsky – His sentiment was “If it’s not broke, don’t fix it.” He said the Vernon Health Department is a tremendous asset to our community.

Brian Decker – local contractor – He is concerned about the files not being here and the number of inspectors that will be in Vernon on a daily basis.

Phyllis McPeek – She had concerns about specimens being picked up from Animal Control.

Janet Morrison – Spoke about the fees being set by the municipality even if the Health Department goes to the County, and feels this projection is not detailed enough. Vernon is poised to go through intensive projects.

Dan Boltz – He commented that that county was here once and asked why they did not follow through.

Ted Warnet – He said the residents are receiving the same type of service from the Vernon Health Department that they would be receiving from the county. In addition, every time a service is privatized it is always a disaster.

Tony Damato – Owner of Rigatoni’s Restaurant and resident. He is satisfied with the Board of Health’s service. He advocated in-house promotions, and asked how much more the residents are going to pay out to the county for their services.

Sally Rinker – Resident and works in Vernon. She commented that the council consider that the residents get the ultimate service by the Vernon Health Department, in terms of cost, and the integrity of human contact.

Jim Opfer – Attorney in Vernon. His concern is the benefit in having that asset readily available.

There being no further comments and/or questions, the Mayor closed the meeting to the public.

Mayor Carew stated due to the late hour the Planning session of Council Goals would be further discussed at another meeting. He gave a summary of what the council’s goals are.

At this time, 9:35 p.m., the Mayor opened the meeting to the staff for any questions and/or comments to the council’s goals.

Lou Kneip, Vernon Engineer – He found the exercise implemented by Melinda Carlton to be very helpful and healthy for the department/division heads. It was an

excellent opportunity for all the supervisors to offer their ideas and thoughts that could help the municipality, council, and staff.

Police Chief Roy Wherry – He said communications is a very important issue. Employees need to know what the goals are, why they are seeking certain goals, and what are they gaining from them. Through communication, the staff could help further the goals envisioned by the council. The staff can be the “best salesmen” the council has. In the past, the council would implement certain goals and the staff was not sure why but worked along with them. Rich Carson said the Faulkner Act impedes it. Mayor Carew stated the council is penciling in a discussion of the Faulkner Act so they are educated to what the duties are of the council/staff. Roy Wherry said this form of government can work but the manager needs to be the medium to exchange ideas not to “build walls” to keep the staff apart.

Gary Martinsen, Vernon – He expressed concern that the recession could play a part on the economics of tourism in town. He has done research and feels that the Faulkner Act is a good form of government for Vernon. He said that the township should be following the State’s Code of Ethics.

Lynn Schweighardt, Vernon Tax Assessor – She appreciated the opportunity to give their goals to the manager. The staff works well together as a team.

There being no further comments and/or questions, the Mayor closed the meeting to the staff.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At this time, 9:56 p.m. Austin Carew made a motion to close the meeting to the public and enter executive session to discuss attorney-client privileges. The motion was seconded by James Oroho, with all in favor.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975 permit’s the exclusion of the public in certain circumstances; and

**WHEREAS**, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist;

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

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of and action upon the hereinafter specified subject matter.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is personnel.
3. It is anticipated that the above-stated subject matter will be made available when deemed appropriate.
4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

The meeting was reopened to the public. The Mayor said we interviewed one candidate for the position of township manager.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items of business on the agenda, a motion was made by Austin Carew to adjourn the meeting and the motion was seconded by James Oroho, with all in favor.

The Special Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was adjourned at 10:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Lycosky, R. M. C.  
Township Clerk

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Presiding Officer