

TOWNSHIP OF VERNON

TOWNSHIP COUNCIL SPECIAL GOAL SETTING MEETING

April 23, 2009

The Special Goal Setting Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 4:37 p.m. on Monday, April 23, 2009 in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Mayor Austin Carew presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of this meeting had been provided to the public and the press on April 20, 2008 and was posted at the Municipal Building.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Present were Council Members Richard Carson, Valerie Seufert, and Mayor Austin Carew. Council Member Gary Gray arrived shortly after roll call. Council Member Glenn McLaughlin was absent. Also present was Township Manager Melinda Carlton.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

2009 Goal Setting

Mayor Austin Carew began the second Goal Setting meeting by reviewing the various Council Goals discussed last year in March. Last year, the top goal setting topics were: Financial Accountability, Economic Development, Perception of Township; Traffic/Mass Transit; Buy United Water; Staff Training; and Beautification of Vernon. Mayor Carew noted that the goals discussed at the April 13, 2009 Goal Setting Meeting were similar to those identified last year.

Council Member Richard Carson reminded everyone that unlike last year, present economic trends must be kept in mind when prioritizing this year's goals.

Mayor Austin Carew discussed the future of the Town Center project and reminded everyone that the Township did not receive any responses the Town Center RFP issued last year. Mayor Carew noted that the build out of the Town Center is dependent on the construction of the water system. While the public wants to see the Town Center succeed, the Township may not be able to commit the estimated \$1.5 million cost to design and construct the Town Center water system at this time. Township Manager Melinda Carlton stated the basic infrastructure is typically provided by the jurisdiction. Sidewalks and streetscaping amenities are then completed by the developers. Louis Kneip commented that the design and construction of the water infrastructure system would take approximately one year to complete. Council Member Valerie Seufert noted that the Township's Redevelopment Consultant advised that the developer's should pay for the construction of the water system and infrastructure.

Mayor Carew informed the management staff that the Township Council will be putting a Referendum question on November's General Election Ballot to allow the voters to decide whether or not the municipality should complete the Town Center water system.

While discussing the Town Center water system, Mayor Carew asked for a straw poll from the management staff whether or not they thought the Township should go ahead and install the water line in the Town Center. The results of the straw poll were seven voting in favor of the Township installing the water line; four opposing. Questions remained whether or not the Town Center would attract commercial ratables in this economic climate regardless of the availability of a water system. Louis Kneip noted that the A&P Shopping Center was approved and constructed based on well water and since has upgraded the well and sprinkler system.

The Township Council discussed their desire to move forward with a clear vision of the Township's future and prioritized the goals identified by the management staff in their January 2009 report.

2009 Council Goals:

1. Strengthen the Foundation. It was agreed that the Township Council and staff must work together on this goal to establish the objectives to be accomplished in the coming year. Increasing budgetary challenges require that town government is run more efficiently and effectively.
2. Municipal Building Renovation. The public receives a negative impression of the appearance of the municipal building and grounds. The building's heating, ventilation and cooling system is dysfunctional and in need of replacement. The Township Manager reported that an architect has been retained to begin the preliminary conceptual design work on the HVAC system and Municipal Building renovation. Further, the Township will apply for an Energy Audit grant from the state to identify additional energy cost savings.
3. Financial Accountability. The formation of the Financial Advisory Committee will assist the Council in reviewing and advising on financial matters including, strategic financial planning, proposals requiring capital appropriations, expenditures of Township funds, the annual Municipal Budget, investment policies/practices and annual financial audit.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Carew opened the meeting for Public Comment.

Gary Martinsen, Vernon resident and business owner, commented that the goals discussed should be more fully stated and defined.

Thomas McClachrie, Vernon Taxpayers Association, commented that a special Business Improvement District (BID) could be designated for the Town Center. Assessment monies collected by the BID would then be reinvested back into the Town Center to further develop amenities.

Seeing no one from the public wishing to speak, Mayor Austin Carew closed the public portion of the meeting.

In closing, the management staff expressed their appreciation to the Council for their interest in working together and interest in learning more about the workloads and responsibilities of each municipal department and impacts or implications budget cuts may have on the delivery of services to the public by the respective municipal departments.

The Township Council appreciated the exchange of ideas with the staff and suggested more frequent meetings should be convened with the municipal staff in order to share information and to continue working on accomplishing the stated goals.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion for Adjournment was made by Council Member Valerie Seufert. Motion seconded by Council Member Gary Gray with all members voting in favor.

The Special Goal Setting Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin R. Kline

Robin R. Kline, MAS, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Minutes approved: May 14, 2009