

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 2, 2026 7:00 PM**

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on March 2, 2026 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 22, 2026, 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 Higgins led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

**ROLL CALL**

Present were Council Members, Carl Contino, Sandra Ooms, Patrick Rizzuto, Bradley Sparta and Council President William Higgins. Also present were Mayor Anthony Rossi, Business Administrator Tina Kraus, CFO Patricia Reiche, Township Attorney Peter King and Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio.

**MAYOR COMMENTS**

On February 18th, our Police and Fire dept responded to a tragic structure fire. The Vernon Township Fire Department and Vernon Township Police Department performed their duties with professionalism and coordination. Tragically, a life was lost along with a dog. I want to recognize not only the emergency response, but what followed. Our officers took deliberate steps to ensure the family was notified with care and dignity, including coordinating with a school outside the district so that they are aware that this child just lost their father. The Vernon township police dept treats the residents in our community like one big family. I commend both departments and thank them for their service.

On March 7th at 1:00 PM, I will be at Jefferson Township High School for the Highlands Impact Rally. I encourage residents to attend as we continue to advocate for meaningful relief related to the impacts of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act.

On March 14th, we will have the Puzzle Hustle and Library Clean-Out.

On March 28th, we will host our Easter Egg Hunt at Maple Grange Park.

Lastly, for the record, Mr. Albert has withdrawn his application from the MUA. Unfortunately, that application was never provided to the full governing body. This is a significant loss. Mr. Albert has extensive experience, owning over 25 apartment complexes across New Jersey and working closely with multiple sewer utilities. He would have been a valuable asset. It's disappointing that the governing body was not given the opportunity to fully consider his qualifications. I believe he had a great deal to offer, or perhaps the MUA prefers the status quo. I hope we see improvements in that process moving forward.

**PRESENTATION**

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

**ITEM FOR DISCUSSION**

**Resolution #26-100:** Amended Authorizing Signatures on Township Checks Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:5-16

Council Member Ooms made a motion to discuss resolution #26-100. Seconded by Council Member Contino.

**RESOLUTION #26-100**

**AMENDED AUTHORIZING SIGNATURES ON TOWNSHIP CHECKS  
PURSUANT TO N.J.S.A. 40A:5-16**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the Township of Vernon that the following Township Officials are hereby authorized to sign checks, withdrawal slips or other related items with two out of the four officials listed as principal signatures being required with the Chief Financial Officer always signing as one of the two required signatures. The CFO oversees financial operations and ensures compliance with regulations, making their signature a valuable addition for accountability. The requirement of the Chief Financial Officer’s signatory enhances financial oversight ensuring that funds are disbursed appropriately:

- Chief Financial Officer
- Mayor
- Business Administrator
- Tax Collector
- Municipal Clerk

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that signature cards with the signatures of the persons authorized to sign be on file at all banks that presently have Township accounts.

This Resolution replaces Resolution #26-91 and shall take effect immediately upon adoption according to law.

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

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

MOVED: Contino

SECOND: Sparta

A roll call was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Sparta, Higgins

NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: Rizzuto

Motion carries to open the meeting for public comment.

Doreen Edwards – commented on the PILOT and when the fees were due.

Sean Clarkin – commented that there should be an Excel spreadsheet for salaries and questions need to be answered.

Peg Distasi – questioned why questions are not answered. Also, asked when the budget will be introduced.

Ann Larsen – feels that the town should request a received report for purchase orders.

Steve Dunlop – expressed concern with the CFO's answers to questions that were asked.

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

MOVED: Sparta  
SECOND: Ooms

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the meeting to the public.

## **REVIEW OF BILLS LIST**

The Council reviewed the bills list.

Council Member Rizzuto made a motion to accept the bills list. Seconded by Council Member Sparta.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

### **February 9, 2026 – Regular Meeting**

Council President Higgins asked for a motion to approve the February 9, 2026 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED: Sparta  
SECOND: Contino

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins  
NAYES:  
ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved the February 9, 2026 regular meeting minutes.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**Resolution #26-101:** Resolution Authorizing Fireworks to be Displayed Within the Township of Vernon in 2026

**Resolution #26-102:** Transfer Resolution – Balance Transfers

**Resolution #26-103:** A Resolution Authorizing Emergency Repair of Municipal Building Facilities

**Resolution #26-104:** Authorizing an Agreement with the County of Sussex, Department of Human Services, Division of Social Services for, Transportation Services for Senior Citizens and People with Disabilities Who Reside in Vernon Township for the Year 2026 In the Amount of \$50,000.00 Per Year

**Resolution #26-105:** Authorizing Change Order #1 Contract for Proposed Improvements to MacPeek Road Within Vernon Township with Dan Swayze & Son, Inc.

**Resolution #26-106:** Authorizing Change Order #1 of Contact for Proposed Improvements to MacPeek Road Within Vernon Township with Campbell Foundry Co.

**Resolution #26-107:** Authorizing Change Order #1 of Contract for Proposed Improvements to MacPeek Road Within Vernon Township with Tilcon New York, LLC

**Resolution #26-108:** Authorizing Change Order #1 of Contract for Proposed Improvements to MacPeek Road Within Vernon Township with Road Safety Systems, LLC

**Resolution #26-109:** A Resolution of the Township of Vernon Authorizing an Agreement Between the Township Police Department and Atlantic Health System, Newton Medical Center to Continue the Joint Participation in the Arrive Together Program

Council President Higgins asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

MOVED: Contino

SECOND: Rizzuto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Contino, Ooms, Rizzuto, Sparta, Higgins

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approved the consent agenda.

**RESOLUTION #26-101**

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING FIREWORKS TO BE DISPLAYED  
WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON IN 2026**

**WHEREAS**, N.J.S.A.21:3-1et seq. Explosive and Fireworks, provides that a Municipal Governing Body must authorize the display of fireworks within its boundaries as a pre-condition to such display in accordance with the New Jersey Fire Prevention Code; and

**WHEREAS**, the following entities have notified the Township of potential fireworks displays in 2026 and provided tentative dates:

Highland Lakes Country Club – August 2, 2026

Mountain Creek Resort  
July 4, 2026 with tentative rain date of July 5, 2026;  
December 31, 2026

Tall Timbers – July 11, 2026

**WHEREAS**, the Fire Marshal stated the permit application, fee and insurance requirements are to be submitted by the applicant at least 30 days prior to event for review.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Council of the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, hereby authorizes the fireworks display with special effects, performed on dates listed above upon satisfaction of all statutory and departmental requirements.

**RESOLUTION #26-102**

**TRANSFER RESOLUTION - BALANCE TRANSFERS**

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon Municipal Budget requires certain modifications to cover potential expenses that may occur in excess of the original budget;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon that the following Transfer of Appropriations in the 2025 Municipal Reserve Budget in accordance with N.J.S.A 40A-58/59 are hereby approved.

<b>ACCOUNT</b>	<b>TRANSFER OUT</b>	<b>TRANSFER IN</b>
FROM CURRENT FUND:		
FIRE PREVENTION - S&W	6,000.00	
RECREATION – S&W	6,000.00	
LAND USE – S&W	10,195.00	
GROUP HEALTH – HEALTH BENEFIT WAIVERS	18,000.00	

TO: CURRENT FUND		
LEGAL SERVICES		22,000.00
ENGINEERING SERVICES		10,000.00
MATCHING FUNDS FOR GRANTS		195.00
UTILITIES		8,000.00
<b>TOTAL TRANSFERS</b>	<b>40,195.00</b>	<b>40,195.00</b>

**RESOLUTION #26-103**

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EMERGENCY REPAIR OF  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING FACILITIES**

**WHEREAS**, the Township has a need for continuity of public business operations in serving the public; and

**WHEREAS**, the offices of the municipal building elevator outage during the storm of February 23, 2026, requiring emergency repair, threatening the continuation of public services affecting the public health, safety and well-being of the public and

**WHEREAS**, the vendor Otis Elevator Company, 105 Fairfield Rd., Fairfield, NJ 07004, has provided a proposal for emergency repair at the cost of \$20,793.65.; and

**WHEREAS**, N.J.S.A.40A:11-6 provides for the creation of an emergency appropriation and emergency procurement, for the public safety health and welfare of the community, for the purpose mentioned above, and,

**WHEREAS**, the Chief Financial Officer hereby certifies that funds are available NOT TO EXCEED \$20,793.65, as follows:

6-01-26-310-55 (B&G Building Repairs)

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, an emergency appropriation is hereby made for the emergency repair of municipal building elevator outage during the storm of February 23, 2026, requiring emergency repair in accord with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-6 in an amount not to exceed \$20,793.65 to Otis Elevator Company, 105 Fairfield Rd., Fairfield, NJ 07004.

**RESOLUTION #26-104**

**AUTHORIZING AN AGREEMENT WITH THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, DEPARTMENT OF  
HUMAN SERVICES, DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES, FOR TRANSPORTATION**

**SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WHO RESIDE IN VERNON TOWNSHIP FOR THE YEAR 2026 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$50,000.00 PER YEAR**

**WHEREAS**, the County of Sussex (hereinafter the County) operates a coordinated, countrywide transportation system and desires to improve paratransit service coverage to the outlying areas of its geographic boundaries; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon (hereinafter the Township) desires transportation for its senior citizens and people with disabilities as per the service agreement; and

**WHEREAS**, the term of the agreement will be in effect beginning January 1, 2026 and terminating on December 31, 2026; and

**WHEREAS**, the cost of these services will not exceed \$50,000.00 per year; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chief Financial Officer has certified the funds for 2026 subject to the adoption of the 2023 Municipal Budget.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, the 2st day of March, 2026 by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex and State of New Jersey as follows:

1. The Township of Vernon is authorized to engage the County of Sussex for the purpose of Transportation for Senior Citizens and People with Disabilities in accordance with the attached agreement; and
2. The Mayor and Township Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to execute an Agreement with the County of Sussex, State of New Jersey.

**RESOLUTION #26-105**

**AUTHORIZING CHANGE ORDER #1 OF CONTRACT FOR PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO MACPEEK ROAD WITHIN VERNON TOWNSHIP WITH DAN SWAYZE & SON, INC.**

**WHEREAS**, on August 11, 2025 by way of adoption of Resolution #25-214, the Council of the Township of Vernon awarded a contract to Dan Swayze & Son, Inc. for Line Striping on MacPeek Road which contract provided for an expenditure of \$6,830.50 and

**WHEREAS**, in a memo dated February 20, 2026, the Township Engineer states that the contract requires a Change Order #1 by the reduction of one (1) item in amount of \$67.10 and the addition of one (1) extra item in amount of \$13.75 resulting in a decreased total contract amount of \$6,777.15; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township Engineer, in concurrence with the Mayor, recommends approving Change Order No. 1 resulting in the adjusted decreased final contract amount of \$6,777.15.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Council of the Township of Vernon that it hereby approves the Township Engineer's recommendations and authorizes the Mayor to execute said Change Order No. 1 for said project resulting in the adjusted decreased final contract amount of \$6,777.15 for said project; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that certified copies of this Resolution be forwarded to Dan Swayze & Son, Inc. and the Township Engineer.

**RESOLUTION #26-106**

AUTHORIZING CHANGE ORDER #1 OF CONTRACT FOR  
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO MACPEEK ROAD  
WITHIN VERNON TOWNSHIP WITH CAMPBELL FOUNDRY CO.

**WHEREAS**, on August 11, 2025 by way of adoption of Resolution #25-214, the Council of the Township of Vernon awarded a contract to Campbell Foundry Co. for Drainage Inlet Accessories on MacPeek Road which contract provided for an expenditure of \$887.80 and

**WHEREAS**, in a memo dated February 20, 2026, the Township Engineer states that the contract requires a Change Order #1 by the addition of two (2) extra items in amount of \$105.00 resulting in an increased total contract amount of \$992.80; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township Engineer, in concurrence with the Mayor, recommends approving Change Order No. 1 resulting in the adjusted final contract amount of \$992.80.

**WHEREAS**, the Chief Finance Officer hereby certifies that the funds are available for these purposes.  
0000000000000000

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Council of the Township of Vernon that it hereby approves the Township Engineer’s recommendations and authorizes the Mayor to execute said Change Order No. 1 for said project resulting in the adjusted increased final contract amount of \$992.80 for said project; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that certified copies of this Resolution be forwarded to Campbell Foundry Co. and the Township Engineer.

**RESOLUTION #26-107**

AUTHORIZING CHANGE ORDER #1 OF CONTRACT FOR  
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO MACPEEK ROAD  
WITHIN VERNON TOWNSHIP WITH TILCON NEW YORK, LLC

**WHEREAS**, on August 11, 2025 by way of adoption of Resolution #25-214, the Council of the Township of Vernon awarded a contract to Tilcon New York, Inc for Milling & Paving on MacPeek Road which contract provided for an expenditure of \$207,165.50 and

**WHEREAS**, in a memo dated February 20, 2026, the Township Engineer states that the contract requires a Change Order #1 by the reduction of three (3) items in amount of \$14,673.67 and the addition of one (1) item in amount of \$604.44 resulting in a decreased total contract amount of \$193,096.27; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township Engineer, in concurrence with the Mayor, recommends approving Change Order No. 1 resulting in the adjusted decreased final contract amount of \$193,096.27.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Council of the Township of Vernon that it hereby approves the Township Engineer's recommendations and authorizes the Mayor to execute said Change Order No. 1 for said project resulting in the adjusted decreased final contract amount of \$193,096.27 for said project; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that certified copies of this Resolution be forwarded to Tilcon New York, Inc. and the Township Engineer.

**RESOLUTION #26-108**

**AUTHORIZING CHANGE ORDER #1 OF CONTRACT FOR  
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO MACPEEK ROAD  
WITHIN VERNON TOWNSHIP WITH ROAD SAFETY SYSTEMS, LLC**

**WHEREAS**, on August 11, 2025 by way of adoption of Resolution #25-214, the Council of the Township of Vernon awarded a contract through the use of the Morris County Cooperative Pricing Council Contract #26 to Road Safety Systems, LLC for Improvements on MacPeek Road which contract provided for an expenditure of \$96,916.00 and

**WHEREAS**, in a memo dated February 20, 2026, the Township Engineer states that the contract requires a Change Order #1 by the reduction of two (2) items in amount of \$1,580.00 and the addition of three (3) extra items in amount of \$29,117.00 resulting in an increased total contract amount of \$124,392.00; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township Engineer, in concurrence with the Mayor, recommends approving Change Order No. 1 resulting in the adjusted final contract amount of \$124,392.00.

**WHEREAS**, the Chief Finance Officer hereby certifies that the funds are available for these purposes.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Council of the Township of Vernon that it hereby approves the Township Engineer's recommendations and authorizes the Mayor to execute said Change Order No. 1 for said project resulting in the adjusted increased final contract amount of \$124,392.00 for said project; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that certified copies of this Resolution be forwarded to road Safety Systems, LLC and the Township Engineer.

**RESOLUTION #26-109**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON AUTHORIZING AN AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT AND ATLANTIC HEALTH SYSTEM,  
NEWTON MEDICAL CENTER TO CONTINUE THE JOINT PARTICIPATION IN THE  
ARRIVE TOGETHER PROGRAM**

**WHEREAS**, the Vernon Township Police Department has recommended that the Mayor and Council approve the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding to continue the joint participation in the Arrive Together Program to enhance and support law enforcement and response

to certain behavioral health crisis calls, along with members of participating Police Departments, and

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor and Council of Vernon Township have determined to approve the execution of the Memorandum of Understanding, attached hereto.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and Council of the Township of Vernon that the Police Chief is hereby authorized to execute on behalf of the Township of Vernon the Memorandum of Understanding with Atlantic Health System, Newton Medical Center.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to 5 Minutes Per Person)**

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

MOVED: Sparta

SECOND: Rizzuto

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the meeting to the public.

Kirk Steven – expressed concern regarding the petition received for the PILOT.

Peg Distasi – expressed concern regarding the PILOT program.

Sean Clarkin – requested that he could email or call into the meetings for public comment. He also expressed concern with PILOT programs. Mr. Clarkin feels that there should be an attorney for the citizens. He also feels that we should shut down the public library and use the High School. Mr. Clarkin would like the Council to work on the 2027 budget.

Steve Dunlop – expressed concern with the MUA and the Township's functions.

Ann Larsen – questioned the sewer fees and if they impact the PILOT programs. She also questioned the appraisal fee for the Legends property. Ms. Larsen questioned the OPRA request she sent for a video that the Mayor made.

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

MOVED: Rizzuto

SECOND: Ooms

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the meeting to the public.

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member Contino commented about Theta Grove and the issuance of the CO. He feels that a corrective action plan needs to be done so this never happens again. He is going to be requesting that a resolution be put on the agenda asking that Mayor Rossi conducts an investigation pertaining to the certificates of occupancy for 7 Theta Drive, to identify how it happened, to prepare and submit a detailed report to the Council no later than 30 days from the approval of the resolution and to submit a correction action plan.

Council Member Rizzuto recognized the DPW for all of the hard work they have done with all of the snow storms we have had this year as well as the EMS and Fire Department. Council Member Rizzuto commented on the treatment of the victims during the Holocaust. He discussed posts on Facebook where people are being made to look like Nazis because there are differences of opinion. He questions why this is allowed to be left on Facebook and the Mayor has the responsibility to take the posts down. Council Member Rizzuto feels that this is not right and this is not freedom of speech but an acceptance of this type of behavior. These post should be taken down and if not, the Council should pass a resolution to have this done as soon as possible.

Council Member Ooms thanked the DPW and the first responders as well as the County Road Department. Council Member Ooms asked the Council to think about doing Work Sessions to discuss issues and the needs of the community as well as come up with goals.

Council Member Rizzuto checked “The Real Inside Vernon” and Anthony Rossi is the Administrator.

Council Member Sparta commented that because of the unusual winter Mountain Creek has been busy. They just had a celebration 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and he commended the owners of Mountain Creek, Joe Hession and Evan Kovach. They presented an award called “The Legend” to Al Lazier for being at Mountain Creek making snow for so long and it was well deserved.

## **COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS**

Council President Higgins commented that the Land Use Board has nothing to do with PILOTS. Council Member Higgins said he is in favor of Zoom being open to the public for comments. He explained that the library system is run by the County and the High School Library is separate. Council Member Higgins feels that there are problems with the MUA and we need answers to what happened with the Theta Drive sewer hookup and when it is going to be paid. Council Member Higgins feels that no one has given an answer. Council Member Higgins made it clear that he spoke to someone on the phone and he did not make any promises. Council Member Higgins suggested that the Mayor get rid of his Facebook pages because they are hurting the town and himself.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 10:05 pm Council Member Sparta made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member Rizzuto.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR  
Municipal Clerk

---

William Higgins  
Council President

Minutes approved: March 23, 2026