

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
JULY 10, 2023 7:00 PM**

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on June 26, 2023 via Zoom Webinar and in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Council President Buccieri presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided to the public and the press on January 6, 2023 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 Buccieri led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

ROLL CALL

Present were Council Members Peg Distasi, Bradley Sparta, and Council President Natalie Buccieri. Also present were Mayor Howard Burrell, Administrator Tina Kraus, CFO Donelle Bright, Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio and Township Attorney Joseph Natale.

Council Members Patrick Rizzuto and Joseph Tadrick were not present.

PRESENTATION

a. Economic Development Advisory Committee

Sally Rinker, Chairperson of the Economic Development Advisory Committee and members of the EDAC gave a presentation on some items that they are working on. The mission of the EDAC is to assist in the retention of existing businesses while working towards accommodating new business for our town. The EDAC spoke about a business guide that they have created, an economic development survey, and a social media policy that they hope the Township Council will consider.

b. Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP)

John Cosh, Deputy Commissioner of Vernon Township Fire Department & Chief of Pochuck Valley Fire Department and Kevin Duffy, Chief of Operations of Glenwood Pochuck EMS, gave presentations to the Council explaining what the LOSAP program is. They are hoping for the Council's support to approve ordinance #23-17 so that a public question could be placed on the general election ballot in November. The proposed Length of Service Awards Program is an incentive program for the volunteers with our Fire Departments and Ambulance Corps. Due to a decline in new membership, an increase in call volume and a general need to attract and retain volunteers for the health and welfare of the citizens of the Township of Vernon, the Administration is proposing a Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP), similar to those in place across the County and around the State. This program is an annual award that is placed into a fixed income account for each member (vested after 5 years of service). The proposal is approved by the Township via ordinance and then sent to the voters to determine via referendum. Ordinance #23-17 provides for both the program and the referendum question to be provided to the Sussex County Clerk.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

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

The Council discussed the LOSAP program and they feel it is long overdue and deserved for the hard-working volunteer firefighters and volunteer EMS.

b. Mayor's Salary

The Council discussed the current Mayor's salary and potentially changing the Mayor's salary in the future to reflect that the Mayor's job is a full-time job. The Council would like to discuss this again at a future Council meeting.

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

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

MOVED: Sparta

SECOND: Distasi

All members were in favor.

Steve Dunlop – expressed concern with the sound system in the courtroom. Mr. Dunlop is not against the LOSAP program but he feels that the LOSAP program needs to be reviewed before it is approved. Mr. Dunlop questioned when the Mayor's salary increase would begin.

Sally Rinker – feels that the LOSAP program is long over due in Vernon and she supports it.

Jessica Paladini – expressed gratitude that the EDAC has presented a social media policy again. Ms. Paladini is happy with Council Member Sparta's comments and well thought out suggestions. Ms. Paladini said that the Mayor's hours would have to be established by ordinance which has not happened.

Ann Larsen – feels that the Mayor's salary should be put on the ballot for the public's vote. Ms. Larsen questioned some of the items on the bills list.

George Nikanorov – questioned why there was an allowance for someone to speak about a non-agenda item. Mr. Nikanorov asked for an explanation of resolutions #23-192 and #23-193 that are both bond anticipation note resolutions.

Chief Financial Officer Bright explained the resolutions.

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

MOVED: Sparta

SECOND: Distasi

All members were in favor.

REVIEW OF BILLS LIST

The Council reviewed the bills list.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 26, 2023 – Regular Meeting

President Buccieri asked for a motion to approve the June 26, 2023 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED: Sparta

SECOND: Distasi

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Distasi, Sparta, Buccieri

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Rizzuto, Tadrick

Motion carries to approve the approve the June 26, 2023 regular meeting minutes.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution #23-187: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 393 Lot 3 – Taormina)

Resolution #23-188: Cancelling Taxes for Total Disabled Veteran

Resolution #23-189: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 393 Lot 3 – Taormina)

Resolution #23-190: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 546 Lot 22 - Keller

Resolution #23-191: Cancelling Taxes for Total Disabled Veteran

Resolution #23-192: Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of Not Exceeding \$600,000 Bond Anticipation Notes of the Township of Vernon, In the County of Sussex, New Jersey

Resolution #23-193: Resolution Authoring the Issuance of Not Exceeding \$6,221,000 Bond Anticipation Notes of the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey

Resolution #23-194: Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of an On-Line and In Person Credit Card Payment and Processing Vendor Through the Competitive Contracting Process Concession

Resolution #23-195: Resolution Authorizing Fireworks to be Displayed on August 6, 2023 with Rain Date of August 12, 2023 within the Township of Vernon

Resolution #23-196: Resolution Authorizing Application to Lead Grant Assistance Program

Resolution #23-197: Chapter 159 Resolution Requesting Approval of Revenue and Appropriation Amending the 2023 Budget as a Revenue and Appropriation \$10,400.00

Resolution #23-198: Refund Overpayment (Block 202 Lot 44 Wells Fargo Real Estate Tax Services)

Resolution #23-199: Refund Overpayment (Block 202 Lot 44 Wells Fargo Real Estate

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

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Distasi

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Distasi, Sparta, Buccieri
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Rizzuto, Tadrick

Motion carries to approve the consent agenda.

RESOLUTION #23-187

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 393 Lot 3 - Taormina)**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
awarded Joseph Taormina 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 4th quarter 2022 property tax in the amount of \$918.22 to Joseph Taormina.

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

RESOLUTION #23-188

(Taormina Block 393 Lot 3)

CANCELLING TAXES FOR TOTAL DISABLED VETERAN

WHEREAS THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS on awarded Joseph Taormina a 100% permanent and total disabled veteran; and

WHEREAS, as of said date the law exempts said property from taxation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon authorizes the Tax Collector to cancel the taxes for 2023 in the amount of \$1,728.05.

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

RESOLUTION #23-189

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 393 Lot 3 - Taormina)**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS awarded Joseph Taormina 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 1st and 2nd quarter 2023 property tax in the amount of \$2,994.23 to Joseph Taormina.

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

RESOLUTION #23-190

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 546 Lot 32 – Keller)**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS awarded Robert Keller 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 1st and 2nd quarter 2023 property tax in the amount of \$3,830.06 to Robert Keller.

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

RESOLUTION #23-191

(Keller Block 546 Lot 32)

CANCELLING TAXES FOR TOTAL DISABLED VETERAN

WHEREAS THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS on awarded Robert Keller a 100% permanent and total disabled veteran; and

WHEREAS, as of said date the law exempts said property from taxation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon authorizes the Tax Collector to cancel the taxes for 2023 in the amount of \$2,063.11.

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

RESOLUTION #23-192

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF NOT EXCEEDING \$600,000 BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, NEW JERSEY.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, NEW JERSEY, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Pursuant to a bond ordinance of the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex (the "Township") entitled: "Bond ordinance providing for the restructuring of a portion of the cost of acquisition of capacity at the sanitary sewage treatment plant of the Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority by the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, appropriating \$2,800,000 therefor and authorizing the issuance of \$2,666,000 bonds or notes of the Township for financing such appropriation", finally adopted on November 14, 2011 (#11-23), bond anticipation notes of the Township

in a principal amount not exceeding \$600,000 shall be issued for the purpose of temporarily financing the improvement or purpose described in Section 3 of said bond ordinance, including (to any extent necessary) the renewal of any bond anticipation notes heretofore issued therefor.

Section 2. All bond anticipation notes (the “notes”) issued hereunder shall mature at such times as may be determined by the treasurer, the chief financial officer or the acting chief financial officer of the Township (the “Chief Financial Officer”), provided that no note shall mature later than one year from its date. The notes shall bear interest at such rate or rates and be in such form as may be determined by the Chief Financial Officer and shall be signed and sealed by officials and officers of the Township in any manner permitted by N.J.S.A. §40A:2-25. The Chief Financial Officer shall determine all matters in connection with the notes issued hereunder, and the Chief Financial Officer’s signature upon the notes shall be conclusive evidence as to all such determinations. All notes issued hereunder may be renewed from time to time subject to the provisions of N.J.S.A. §40A:2-8. The Chief Financial Officer is hereby authorized to sell part or all of the notes at not less than par from time to time at public or private sale and to deliver them to the purchasers thereof upon receipt of payment of the purchase price. The Chief Financial Officer is directed to report in writing to the governing body of the Township at the meeting next succeeding the date when any sale or delivery of the notes hereunder is made. Such report must include the principal amount, interest rate and maturities of the notes sold, the price obtained and the name of the purchaser.

Section 3. Any note issued pursuant to this resolution shall be a general obligation of the Township, and the Township’s faith and credit are hereby pledged to the punctual payment of the principal of and interest on the notes and, unless otherwise paid or payment provided for, an amount sufficient for such payment shall be inserted in the budget and a tax sufficient to provide for the payment thereof shall be levied and collected.

Section 4. The Chief Financial Officer is hereby authorized and directed to do all other matters necessary, useful, convenient or desirable to accomplish the delivery of the notes to the purchasers thereof as promptly as possible, including (i) the preparation, execution and dissemination of a Preliminary Official Statement and Final Official Statement with respect to the notes, (ii) preparation, distribution and publication, if necessary, of a Notice of Sale with respect to the notes, (iii) execution of a Continuing Disclosure Undertaking, with respect to the notes in accordance with Rule 15c2-12 promulgated by the Securities and Exchange Commission and (iv) execution of an arbitrage and use of proceeds certificate certifying that, among other things, the Township, to the extent it is empowered and allowed under applicable law, will do and perform all acts and things necessary or desirable to assure that interest paid on the notes is not included in gross income under Section 103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

Section 5. All action heretofore taken by Township officials and professionals with regard to the sale and award of the notes is hereby ratified, confirmed, adopted and approved.

Section 6. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

Upon motion of Sparta, seconded by Distasi, the foregoing resolution was adopted by the following vote:

RESOLUTION #23-193

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF NOT EXCEEDING \$6,221,000 BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, NEW JERSEY.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, NEW JERSEY, AS FOLLOWS:

Pursuant to a bond ordinance of the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex (the “Township”) entitled: “Bond ordinance appropriating \$4,015,000, and authorizing the issuance of \$3,130,000 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”, finally adopted on May 24, 2021 (#21-12), bond anticipation notes of the Township in a principal amount not exceeding \$2,000,000 shall be issued for the purpose of temporarily financing the improvement or purpose described in Section 3 of said bond ordinance, including (to any extent necessary) the renewal of any bond anticipation notes heretofore issued therefor.

Pursuant to a bond ordinance of the Township entitled: “Bond ordinance providing for the acquisition of a new fire truck by the Township of Vernon, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, appropriating \$655,000 therefor and authorizing the issuance of \$424,047 bonds or notes of the Township for financing such appropriation”, finally adopted on April 11, 2022 (#22-08), bond anticipation notes of the Township in a principal amount not exceeding \$424,000 shall be issued for the purpose of temporarily financing the improvement or purpose described in Section 3 of said bond ordinance, including (to any extent necessary) the renewal of any bond anticipation notes heretofore issued therefor.

Pursuant to a bond ordinance of the Township entitled: “Bond ordinance appropriating \$1,955,000, and authorizing the issuance of \$1,365,000 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”, finally adopted on May 23, 2022 (#22-10), bond anticipation notes of the Township in a principal amount not exceeding \$1,365,000 shall be issued for the purpose of temporarily financing the improvement or purpose described in Section 3 of said bond ordinance, including (to any extent necessary) the renewal of any bond anticipation notes heretofore issued therefor.

Pursuant to a bond ordinance of the Township entitled: “Bond ordinance appropriating \$2,861,000, and authorizing the issuance of \$2,432,486 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”, finally adopted on June 12, 2023 (#23-___), bond anticipation notes of the Township in a principal amount not exceeding \$2,432,000 shall be issued for the purpose of temporarily financing the improvement or purpose described in Section 3 of said bond ordinance, including (to any extent necessary) the renewal of any bond anticipation notes heretofore issued therefor.

All bond anticipation notes (the “notes”) issued hereunder shall mature at such times as may be determined by the treasurer, the chief financial officer or the acting chief financial officer of the Township (the “Chief Financial Officer”), provided that no note shall mature later than one year from its date. The notes shall bear interest at such rate or rates and be in such form as may be determined by the Chief Financial Officer and shall be signed and sealed by officials and officers of the Township in any manner permitted by N.J.S.A. §40A:2-25. The Chief Financial Officer shall determine all matters in connection with the notes issued hereunder, and the Chief Financial Officer’s signature upon the notes shall be conclusive evidence as to all such determinations. All notes issued hereunder may be renewed from time to time subject to the provisions of N.J.S.A. §40A:2-8. The Chief Financial Officer is hereby authorized to sell part or all of the notes at not less than par from time to time at public or private sale and to deliver them to the purchasers thereof upon receipt of payment of the purchase price. The Chief Financial Officer is directed to report in writing to the governing body of the Township at the meeting next succeeding the date when any sale or delivery of the notes hereunder is made. Such report must include the principal amount, interest rate and maturities of the notes sold, the price obtained and the name of the purchaser.

Any note issued pursuant to this resolution shall be a general obligation of the Township, and the Township’s faith and credit are hereby pledged to the punctual payment of the principal of and interest on the notes and, unless otherwise paid or payment provided for, an amount sufficient for such

payment shall be inserted in the budget and a tax sufficient to provide for the payment thereof shall be levied and collected.

The Chief Financial Officer is hereby authorized and directed to do all other matters necessary, useful, convenient or desirable to accomplish the delivery of the notes to the purchasers thereof as promptly as possible, including (i) the preparation, execution and dissemination of a Preliminary Official Statement and Final Official Statement with respect to the notes, (ii) preparation, distribution and publication, if necessary, of a Notice of Sale with respect to the notes, (iii) execution of a Continuing Disclosure Undertaking, with respect to the notes in accordance with Rule 15c2-12 promulgated by the Securities and Exchange Commission and (iv) execution of an arbitrage and use of proceeds certificate certifying that, among other things, the Township, to the extent it is empowered and allowed under applicable law, will do and perform all acts and things necessary or desirable to assure that interest paid on the notes is not included in gross income under Section 103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

All action heretofore taken by Township officials and professionals with regard to the sale and award of the notes is hereby ratified, confirmed, adopted and approved.

This resolution shall take effect immediately.

Upon motion of Sparta, seconded by Distasi, the foregoing resolution was adopted by the following vote:

RESOLUTION #23-194

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE HIRING OF AN ON-LINE AND IN PERSON CREDIT CARD PAYMENT AND PROCESSING VENDOR THROUGH THE COMPETITIVE CONTRACTING PROCESS CONCESSION

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon (“Township”) has a desire to provide for on-line and in-person credit card payments and process services; and

WHEREAS, such services are currently available to be provided through the competitive contracting process under the New Jersey Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-4.1 (j); and

WHEREAS, the Township desires to evaluate such service offerings from Vendors within the procedures as set forth in the New Jersey Local Public Contracts Law (N.J.S.A.40A:11-4.1 et. seq. and N.J.A.C. 5:34-4 et. seq.); and

WHEREAS, the Township desires to conduct the concession procurement in accord with N.J.A.C. 5:34-9.4 et. seq.; and

WHEREAS, the Township desires to enter into a contract for up to a five (5) year contract that will satisfy the needs of the Township; and

WHEREAS, as per statute the process will be administered by the Qualified Purchasing Agent (N.J.S.A 40A:11-4.5 (d)); and

WHEREAS, as per statute the concession has been approved in writing as a legal matter by the Township Attorney (N.J.A.C. 5:34-9.4 (d)); and

WHEREAS, the Township is not expected to incur costs in providing for the program.

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

1. The Qualified Purchasing Agent is hereby authorized to commence the competitive contract/ procurement as allowable under the New Jersey Local Public Contracts Law for on-line and in-person credit card payments and process services, allowing for a minimum of 20 days' notice after advertisement to receive responses, per Local Public Contracts Law.

RESOLUTION #23-195

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING FIREWORKS TO BE DISPLAYED ON AUGUST 6, 2023 WITH RAIN DATE OF AUGUST 12, 2023 WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON

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, Highland Lakes Country Club and Community Association has submitted an application to Vernon Township to conduct fireworks display on Sunday August 6, 2023 with a rain date of Saturday August 12, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the proposed fireworks display will take place on Lakeside Drive East on the Dam of Highland Lakes on property owned by Highland Lakes Country Club & Community Association; and

WHEREAS, the Association has engaged in a contract with Garden State Fireworks, Inc. Millington NJ, to perform the public fireworks and special effects display and has provided the required certificate of liability insurance.

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 by Garden State Fireworks, Inc. and sponsored by the Highland Lakes Country Club and Community Association on August 6, 2023 with a rain date of August 12, 2023 upon satisfaction of all statutory and departmental requirements.

RESOLUTION #23-196

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATION TO LEAD GRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WHEREAS, effective July 22, 2022, the Legislature enacted P.L. 2021, c. 182, “An Act concerning certain lead-based paint hazard, and residential rental property, and establishing lead-based paint hazard programs, supplementing P.L. 2003, c. 311 (C. 52:27D-437.1 et al.) amending various parts of the statutory law, and making an appropriation;” and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:27D-437.16(b)(1), a municipality that maintains a permanent local agency for the purpose of conducting inspections and enforcing laws, ordinances, and regulations concerning buildings and structures, is required to inspect for lead-based paint hazards in certain specified single-family, two-family, and multiple rental dwellings, at the time periods set forth in the statute; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:27D-437.16(b)(2) a municipality that does not maintain such a permanent local agency must hire a lead evaluation contractor, certified to provide lead paint inspection services by DCA, or enter a shared services agreement as permitted by law, for the purpose of conducting the inspections for lead-based paint hazards; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to Section 9 of P.L. 2021, c. 182, the State of New Jersey has allocated the sum of \$3,900,000 to effectuate the purposes of P.L. 2021, c. 182 (C. 52:27D-437.16). Further, pursuant to the FY 2023 Appropriations Act (P.L. 2022, Chapter 49), DCA received a grant-in-aid amount of \$3,900,000 for P.L. 2021, c. 182, for a total of \$7,800,000 in appropriations to effectuate the purpose of the Act.

WHEREAS, DCA has allocated \$7,000,000 of this appropriation to the development of the Lead Grant Assistance Program (“LGAP”) for the issuance of grant funds to municipalities for the purpose of assisting in municipal compliance with P.L. 2021, c. 182.

WHEREAS, the Division of Local Government Services (DLGS), within DCA, administers the LGAP; and

WHEREAS, the LGAP exists to provide funding to help off-set the costs to municipalities to provide the required inspections at stipulated times of certain single-family, two-family, and multiple rental dwelling units for lead-based paint hazards, pursuant to P.L. 2021, c. 182; and

WHEREAS, an authorized municipal officer must execute the attached grant agreement in order to receive LGAP funding.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Governing Body of the Township of Vernon does hereby authorize the Township Administrator to sign the attached grant agreement, and thus bind the Township of Vernon to the grant agreement's terms in order to receive the \$10,400.00 grant from the DLGS.

RESOLUTION #23-197

CHAPTER 159 RESOLUTION REQUESTING APPROVAL OF REVENUE AND APPROPRIATION AMENDING THE 2023 BUDGET AS A REVENUE AND APPROPRIATION OF \$10,400.00

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:4-87 provides that the Director of the Division of Local Government Services may approve the insertion of any special item of revenue in the budget of any county or municipality when such item shall have been made available by law and the amount thereof was not determined at the time of the adoption of the budget; and

WHEREAS, said Director may also approve the insertion of an item of appropriation for an equal amount; and

WHEREAS, the Township has been awarded a \$10,400.00 New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Lead Grant Assistance Program Grant; and wishes to amend its 2023 budget for the difference of the awarded amount as a revenue.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Council of the Township of Vernon hereby requests the Director of the Division of Local Government Services to approve the insertion of an item of revenue in the budget of the year 2023 in the sum of \$10,400.00 which is now available as a revenue,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a like sum of \$10,400.00 is hereby appropriated under the caption New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Lead Grant Assistance Program Grant.

RESOLUTION #23-198

REFUND OVERPAYMENT (Block 202 Lot 44 Wells Fargo Real Estate Tax Services)

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Wells Fargo Real Estate Tax Services in the amount of \$3400.83. Representing refunds for overpayment of the following property taxes for paying on the wrong block and lot:

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Szollosi	202	44	\$3400.83
		TOTAL:	\$3400.83

Szollosi- refund for overpayment of 3rd qtr. 2019 in the amount of \$1864.30 and 4th quarter 2019 in the amount of \$1536.53 property taxes for Block 202 Lot 44.

RESOLUTION #23-199

**REFUND OVERPAYMENT
(Block 202 Lot 44 Wells Fargo Real Estate Tax Services)**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Township of Vernon, Vernon, New Jersey, that a warrant be drawn to Wells Fargo Real Estate Tax Services in the amount of \$5988.67 Representing refunds for overpayment of the following property taxes for paying on the wrong block and lot:

OWNER	BLOCK	LOT	REFUND AMOUNT
Szollosi	202	44	\$5988.67
		TOTAL:	\$5988.67

Szollosi- refund for overpayment of 1st qtr. 2020 in the amount of \$1768.30, 2nd qtr. 2020 in the amount of \$1768.29 and 3rd quarter 2020 in the amount of \$2452.08 property taxes for Block 202 Lot 44.

RESOLUTION

Resolution #23-156: Resolution of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, Authorizing the Hiring Emergency Medical Services Through the Competative Contracting Process

Council Member Sparta made a motion to amend resolution #23-156. Seconded by Council Member Distasi.

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Distasi, Sparta, Buccieri

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Rizzuto, Tadrick

Motion carries to amend resolution #23-186.

Council Member Buccieri asked for a motion to approve resolution #23-156 as amended.

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Distasi

A roll call vote was taken:
AYES: Distasi, Sparta, Buccieri
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Rizzuto, Tadrick

Motion carries to approve the resolution #23-156 as amended.

INTRODUCTION 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 introduce ordinance #23-17.

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Distasi

A roll call vote was taken:
AYES: Distasi, Sparta, Buccieri
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT: Rizzuto, Tadrick

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #23-17.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to 5 Minutes Per Person)

President Buccieri asked for a motion to open the meeting for public comment.

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Distasi

All members were in favor.

Steve Dunlop – questioned an item on the bills list because he has concerns about the SCUMA lawsuit.

Thomas Dike – clarified that the LOSAP program has to go on the election ballot in November for the public to vote on.

Jessica Paladini – commented that the SCUMA lawsuit cost the town \$86,000. Ms. Paladini feels that because the EDAC presentation spoke about a social media policy, the public can now comment on that subject. Ms. Paladini has concerns about the Mayor’s potential salary raise. Ms. Paladini expressed concerns regarding Daniel’s Law and OPRA.

George Nikanorov – feels that a social media policy and Facebook should not have been spoken about as an agenda item.

Sally Rinker – commented on what she thought that the Mayor’s salary should be.

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

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Distasi

All members were in favor.

MAYOR COMMENTS

At our last Council meeting, three members of the Council voted in favor of a resolution which served as a public expression of their opinion that I, as Mayor, should direct the Chief Financial Officer to move forward with actions to prepare a bond ordinance that would commit the taxpayers of Vernon to borrowing and paying back a 350K\$ loan to build a band shell.

Because this request was never made to me directly or in person, but instead through a resolution at a public Council meeting, I believe that it’s proper and appropriate for me to reply to this request at a public Council meeting.

First, let me express my agreement with the first several paragraphs of this resolution - - these paragraphs simply lay out a series of historical facts related to the Vietnam War.

Second, I agree that it’s fitting and proper for Vernon, as well as every other town in America, to honor all of our nation’s veterans, be they veterans from the American Revolution or the American Civil Wars; from WWI or WWII; from the Korean or Vietnam Wars; from the Gulf or Iraq Wars; from the Afghanistan War, and/or any other war or military conflict in which our nation’s men and women have served.

I am one of those Vietnam War Era Veterans, having served my Vietnam War Era time as a Captain with a U.S. Air Force Strategic Command Unit that was stationed at Anderson AFB in Guam, where we flew B-52 bombing missions into Vietnam.

In addition, I am a Life Member of the Vietnam Veterans of America.

So, let me be clear - - I don't view this as an issue of a band shell being the only way, or even the most appropriate way, for Vernon to honor its Vietnam War Era Veterans.

For example, two of our three municipal parks - - the Maple Grange Park and the Town Center Park - - have no memorialized names; and, I believe that our municipal governing body and the public could reach agreement to name either one of these municipal parks, the Vietnam War Veteran's Memorial Park.

These are just two of several possible actions that our town could take to honor our Vietnam War Era Veterans, and none of these actions would require taxpayers to borrow 350K\$.

So while I agree with certain portions of this resolution of opinion, I do have concerns about the fact that the closing paragraph of this resolution requests that I use my authority as Mayor to authorize a bond ordinance that would obligate the taxpayers of Vernon to borrow 350K\$ to build a band shell.

I understand that there are times when a municipal government is forced to obligate its taxpayers to pay for borrowed money in the form of bond ordinances.

However, I also believe that a sensitivity to, plus an understanding of, the impact that borrowing money will have on our homeowner's tax bills, require that bond ordinances be used sparingly and wisely, and not without a great deal of thought.

In addition, during this year, among the bond ordinances that this Council has scrutinized, examined, discussed and questioned, are bond ordinances that I have presented that contained items such as:

- A 220K\$ Single Axle Truck that we need for the DPW;
- A 180K\$ Ambulance that we need for one of our Volunteer EMS units;
- 85K\$ that we need to upgrade our Fire Department Radios; and ...
- A 46K\$ Asphalt Hotbox that we need to facilitate our road repair efforts.

Each of these are items that cost less than the 350K\$ that I am being asked to authorize the taxpayers of Vernon to borrow for the purpose of building a band shell; and yet, before the Council would vote to approve any of these items, they required that the administration provide them detailed, specific information to support the administration's request for these items.

And now, I am being asked to authorize a 350K\$ bond ordinance, without being given any specifics or any details.

I don't see how any Council member who claims to be concerned about high taxes in Vernon can vote to borrow an unnecessary 350K\$.

Should we honor our veterans? YES!

Should we be taking an action that would create unnecessary taxpayer debt? NO!

And I will, therefore, not authorize this requested 350K\$ bond ordinance.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Distasi agrees with the Mayor that we have many ways to honor our Veterans. Spending \$350,000 on a band shell that we do not need is inappropriate. A 501C3 can be formed and the band shell can be paid for with donations.

Council Member Distasi feels that the continuing political slander, bulling and harassment by Ms. Paladini has to stop. Council Member Distasi said that she will call a point of order every time it happens. Council Member Distasi will seek legal council if this does not stop.

Council Member Sparta had no comments.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Council President Buccieri had no comments.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:35 pm Council Member Sparta made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member Distasi.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR
Municipal Clerk

Natalie Buccieri
Council President

Minutes approved: August 14, 2023