

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 22, 2025 7:00 PM**

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on September 22, 2025, 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 19, 2025, 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 Rizzuto led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

ROLL CALL

Present were Council Members, Natalie Buccieri, Jessica DeBenedetto, William Higgins, Bradley Sparta and Council President Patrick Rizzuto. Also present were Mayor Anthony Rossi, Business Administrator Tina Kraus, Township Attorney Peter King and Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio.

Council President Rizzuto asked for a moment of silence for all of the victims of recent the shootings.

MAYOR COMMENTS

Mayor Rossi commented on the 50-year anniversary of the Vernon Township Police Department. Thanking the Police Department for 50 years of courage and commitment to keeping Vernon safe. They are the reason Vernon is the safest town in New Jersey and the top ten in the Country for the past two years. Today we honor the men and women who have bravely served on our Police Department.

PRESENTATIONS

Police 50th Anniversary Recognition

Swearing in of New Officers and Promotions

Corporal to Sgt. Stephen Rovetto
Corporal to Sgt. Derrick Scudieri
New Hire - Ptl. Nicholas Biango

Council President Rizzuto asked for a 10 minutes recess.

All members were in favor.

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

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

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: DeBenedetto

All members were in favor.

Cindy Webber – thanked the Police Department for keeping the public safe.

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

MOVED: Higgins
SECOND: DeBenedetto

All members were in favor.

REVIEW OF BILLS LIST

The Council reviewed the bills list.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution #25-260: Authorizing the Cancellation of Outstanding Checks Over Six Months Old

to Municipal Cash Balances

Resolution #25-262: Approval Weldon Asphalt Co. Through Union County Cooperative Purchasing

Resolution #25-263: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 202 Lot 39)

Resolution #25-264: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 610 Lot 5) – Revised

Resolution #25-265: Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 382 Lot 17) – Revised

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

MOVED: Buccieri

SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approve the consent agenda.

RESOLUTION #25-260

AUTHORIZING THE CANCELLATION OF OUTSTANDING CHECKS OVER SIX MONTHS OLD TO MUNICIPAL CASH BALANCES

WHEREAS, the Chief Financial Officer has determined that the following Township checks have been outstanding for a period in excess of six months:

CENTRAL CHECKING ACCOUNT ENDING IN 3102:

63158	1/24/25	161.39 Morpho USA Inc	\$161.39
63576	3/19/25	762.00 Weiner Law Group	\$762.00
<hr/>			\$923.39

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the above outstanding checks be restored to the Township cash balances.

RESOLUTION #25-262

Approval Weldon Asphalt Co. Through Union County Cooperative Purchasing

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon has a need for asphalt supply for repair and maintenance of its public roadways; and,

WHEREAS, The Township of Vernon is a member of the Union County Cooperative Purchasing system; and

WHEREAS, the Union County Cooperative Purchasing system (UCCP-64-2024) has been organized and formed in accord with New Jersey Law and Administrative codes of N.J.A.C. 5:34-7.3; and,

WHEREAS, the Union County Cooperative Purchasing system offers as a competitively bid and price contract Union County Co-op FOB

WHEREAS, the purchasing agent has concurred with the legality of the purchase in accord with the New Jersey Local Publics Contract Law (N.J.S..40A:11-1 et. Seq.);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, in the

County of Sussex as follows:

The Union County Cooperative system contract for Weldon Asphalt Co. Contract number Union County Co-op Road Materials Bid, is hereby approved for use by the Department of Public Works.

RESOLUTION #25-263

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 202 Lot 39)**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
awarded Reno Schwind 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 2024 property tax in the amount of \$1612.47 to Reno Schwind.

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

RESOLUTION #25-264

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 610 Lot 5) - Revised**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
awarded Fred Amerspek 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 2025 property tax in the amount of \$5,860.93 to Fred Amerspek.

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

RESOLUTION #25-265

**REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 382 Lot 17) - Revised**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
awarded Tyrus Hicks 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 2024 property tax in the amount of \$2,042.81 to Tyrus Hicks.

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

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution #25-259: Resolution Authorizing the Option for Employees of the Township of Vernon to Waive Health Insurance Benefits

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-259.

MOVED: DeBenedetto
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES: DeBenedetto

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-259.

RESOLUTION #25-259

Resolution Authorizing the Option for Employees of the Township of Vernon to Waive Health Insurance Benefits

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon (hereinafter “Township”) is continually seeking to reduce expenditures where appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the Township provides health benefit coverage to all regular full-time employees; and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:10-17.1 authorizes municipalities to permit employees to waive health care coverage when such employees are covered for health care under the coverage of a spouse; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to statute, the Township may pay to the waiving employee an amount equal to not more than 25% or \$5,000.00, whichever is less, of the amount saved by the Township when coverage is waived; and

WHEREAS, the Township desires to implement such a cost efficiency measure for the year 2026; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the Township of Vernon hereby implements the following provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:10-17.1:

1. Any employee who elects to waive health care coverage pursuant to this Resolution shall be paid a sum equal to 25% or \$5,000.00, whichever is less, of the health care premium savings received by the Township. Payment of sums required under this Resolution shall be made to the Employee on a monthly basis, each payment being one twelfth of the total sum due.
2. An employee shall be eligible for such waiver and payment only upon compliance with, and under the terms of, the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:10-17.1.
3. An employee shall be eligible to, or required to, resume coverage pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:10-17.1.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption according to law.

Resolution #25-261: Authorizing the Award of Contract for Professional Services

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve resolution #25-261.

MOVED: Higgins
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Sparta, Rizzuto

NAYES: Higgins

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approve resolution #25-261.

RESOLUTION #25-261

AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

WHEREAS, there is a need for Professional Services to the Township of Vernon for Financial Operations;

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5 specifically exempts professional services from provisions of public bidding as provided in the Local Public Contracts Law; and

WHEREAS, the procurement was conducted in a required disclosure manner in accordance with N.J.S.A. 19:44A-20.5; and

WHEREAS, the vendor has provided for a business entity disclosure contribution form and a political contribution disclosure form, indicating the vendor has not made any reportable contributions and will not during the term of this contract; and

WHEREAS, the performance of said professional services requires knowledge of an advanced field of learning acquired by a prolonged formal course of specialized training and study as distinguished from general academic instruction or apprenticeship and training; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon is desirous to enter into an agreement with these professionals as a required disclosure contract pursuant to the provisions of the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq., as amended; and

WHEREAS, the Local Public Contracts Law N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq., as amended, requires that this Resolution be publicly advertised.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Township of Vernon that they hereby authorize and approve the award of contracts of a Professional Service Contract pursuant to the provisions of the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:20-1 et seq. to provide Services in accordance with the attached Contracts for Professional Services pursuant to a non-fair and open contract to the following:

1. Phoenix Consulting Group - Financial Operation Services
Line Item 5-01-20-130-20 not to exceed \$12,000.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the award of contract shall be contingent upon the completion and receipt of the following:

- (a) A fully-executed professional services contract detailing the scope of services, established fees for said professional services, mandatory Equal Opportunity Language and Affirmative Action Certificate; and
- (b) Receipt of all statutorily mandated "pay to play" political contribution forms pursuant to N.J.S.A. 19:44A-20.4 et seq.; and
- (c) New Jersey Business Registration Certificate; and
- (d) Upon the aforementioned professional being a member in good standing in his respective profession.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Municipal Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to execute, seal and deliver the attached Contracts for Professional Services on behalf of and in the name of the Township of Vernon and that the Municipal Clerk shall publish the award of contract as required by law within ten (10) days of passage of this Resolution.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Ordinance #25-14: An Ordinance to Establish a New Chapter in the Code of Vernon Township, Part 1 Administrative Legislation Chapter 2 Entitled "Restricted Areas to Safeguard the Public and Confidential or Exempt Records from Disclosure"

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #25-14.

MOVED: DeBenedetto
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #25-14.

Ordinance #25-15: Ordinance Amending the Salaries for Certain Officers and Employees of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #25-15.

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Sparta, Rizzuto
NAYES: Higgins
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #25-15.

PUBLIC HEARING/ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE

Ordinance #25-13: An Ordinance of the Township of Vernon Amending Chapter 250, Article II “Fees and Escrows Enumerated”, § 250-11, of the Revised General Ordinances of the Township of Vernon

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open the floor for public hearing on ordinance #25-13.

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the floor to the public for public hearing of ordinance #25-13.

Seeing no members of the public wishing to come forward, President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close the public hearing on ordinance #25-13.

MOVED: Higgins
SECOND: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the floor for public comment.

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to adopt ordinance #25-13.

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Buccieri, DeBenedetto, Higgins, Sparta, Rizzuto
NAYES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Motion carries to adopt ordinance #25-13.

ORDINANCE #25-13

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON AMENDING
CHAPTER 250, ARTICLE II "FEES AND ESCROWS
ENUMERATED", § 250-11, OF THE REVISED GENERAL
ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON.**

WHEREAS, Vernon Township Police Department ("Department") expends significant time and resources in responding to requests for copies of body-worn camera footage; and

WHEREAS, the Department has prepared on numerous occasions copies of camera footage for requestors who do not follow through with collecting their requested records, preventing the Department from collecting a fee for the time and effort spent producing the copied footage.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Mayor and Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, and State of New Jersey, that certain sections of the Township Code be amended and added as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 250, Article II, of the Revised General Ordinances of the Township of Vernon, is hereby amended as follows:

§250-11. Fees assessed for government record requests through Open Public Records Act.

New Jersey has adopted the Open Public Records Act, "OPRA," N.J.S. A. 47: 1A- 1, which has as its general purpose making government records more available to the public than they have been in the past. Through N.J.S. A. 47: 1A- 5, OPRA permits municipalities to require the payment of fees and special service charges as a prerequisite to the production of records. In accordance with OPRA, when a request for records is made via OPRA, the following fees shall be assessed:

A. Except as otherwise provided by law or regulation, the following fees shall be assessed for the duplication of a government record embodied in the form of printed matter:

- 1) per page for letter-sized pages and smaller: \$ 0. 05.
- 2) per page for legal-sized pages and larger: \$ 0. 07.
- 3) records supplied in another medium, such as CDs, DVDs, thumb drives, large maps and plans, and other materials shall be charged at the actual cost of duplication, the "actual cost" is the specific fee the agency paid to purchase the materials.

B. Except as provided in Subsection E of this section, electronic copies of records *i.e.*, records sent via email and fax, shall be provided free of charge, provided the Township is able to provide the requested materials electronically.

C. Mailing costs to ship copied records to requestors will be based on their selected shipping means (U.S. Postal Service, FedEx, or UPS) and be the direct costs for shipping.

D. The Township should assess a special service charge when the nature, format, manner of collation, or volume of records to be collected, redacted and produced involves extraordinary time and effort. See N.J.S.A. 47: 1A- 5(c). In accordance with OPRA, special service charges shall be based upon the actual direct cost of providing the records, including the cost of materials, technology, and labor. The Township shall provide a requestor an estimate of the special service charge prior to incurring the charge. The Township may request a deposit from the requestor prior to processing any OPRA special service charge.

E. Camera Footage— When body- worn camera/ police vehicle footage is requested from Vernon Police Department, the footage generally requires review for possible redaction.

- 1) for every one (1) hour of camera footage requested, it shall be assumed that three (3) hours were required to review the footage for redaction purposes.
- 2) requests for camera footage will be charged a fee of actual direct cost meaning hourly rate of the lowest level employee capable of fulfilling the request (no fringe benefits).
- 3) camera footage review fees shall be billable in half-hour increments.
- 4) requests for body-worn / vehicle camera footage with run-times of less than one-half (.5) hours shall be provided free of charge.
- 5) prior to reviewing and production of recorded camera footage, the requestor shall be provided with an estimated charge for production of the footage. For the review and production to proceed, the requestor shall provide Vernon Township Police with a deposit in the amount of fifty (50%) percent of the estimated charge.

SECTION 2. All other Ordinances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed as to such inconsistency.

SECTION 3. If any section, paragraph, subdivision, clause or provision of this Ordinance shall be adjudged invalid, such adjudication shall apply only to the section, paragraph, subdivision, clause or provision so adjudged and the remainder of this Ordinance shall be deemed valid and effective.

SECTION 4. This Ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and publication according to law.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to 5 Minutes Per Person)

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

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to open the floor to the public.

Bruce Campbell, owner of Bubba's Texas Wieners – expressed concern with the town's sign ordinance.

Jessi Paladini – asked for the Council's support of the transfer of ownership of the Price's Switch Schoolhouse to the Vernon Historical Society.

Cindy Webber – expressed concern regarding landscaping trucks parked on the road.

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

MOVED: DeBenedetto
SECOND: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the floor to public comments.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Higgins questioned who should be enforcing the chicken and lighting ordinances.

Council Member DeBenedetto read a statement regarding the shooting of Charlie Kirk.

Council Member Sparta had no comment.

Council Member Buccieri congratulated the police department. She feels that it has been a difficult week.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Council President Rizzuto commented that the youth football team is doing great. Council Member Rizzuto is proud of the police department and how they support each other. Council President Rizzuto was pleased to be part of the celebration for the high school's 50 year anniversary.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:29 pm Council Member DeBenedetto made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Council Member Buccieri.

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Gianattasio, RMC, CMR
Municipal Clerk

Patrick Rizzuto
Council President

Minutes approved: October 16, 2025