

**VERNON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 9, 2024 7:00 PM**

This Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:00 p.m. on September 9, 2024 via Zoom Webinar and 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 17, 2024 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, CFO Donelle Bright, Municipal Clerk Marcy Gianattasio and Township Attorney Matthew Moench.

PRESENTATION

Cpl. Rovetto
Legends

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Food Truck/Food Cart Ordinance
Sign Ordinance

MAYOR COMMENTS

Tonight, I figured I would start with the sad news first, which is the passing of our Fire Marshal, Lou Tosto. Lou was born in Hackensack and started his 43-year career in firefighting service with the Hackensack Fire Department. Lou served as a volunteer fireman and was also a fire inspector for many different municipalities including Paterson, Ramsey, Lodi, Rochelle Park and Elmwood Park. Lou was a proud member of the Lodi Fire Department for more than 30 years, serving as a former Chief of the Department while also holding a position with the Lodi Fire Department Honor Guard. He was a Life Member of the Lodi Exempt Firemen's Association and the New Jersey State Firemen's Association, as well as the South Bergen Fire Chief's Association and a graduate of the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice awarding him the title of Arson Investigator. Lou finished his fire service career as the Fire Marshal for the Township of Vernon. In remembrance of Lou, I ask if we can have a moment of silence. Thank you.

This Wednesday is September 11th. At 6:30 PM, we will hold a remembrance ceremony in front of the survival tree.

Last week, we had our first Historical Preservation Commission meeting. The council has restored this preservation, which is very important for the future of historical sites in Vernon Township.

In other updates, we are close to completing our camera installations. These cameras will cover every corner inside our municipal building and provide an added layer of protection for our employees.

This year, we budgeted for an additional Department of Public Works (DPW) employee due to new stormwater mandates. We also had an employee leave, which left us with 2 open full-time positions. These positions were filled by Drew Van Gorder and Nick Styles, who also volunteers at our local fire department.

The town facelift project is still moving forward. The county has verbally approved the project, and we are awaiting the final stamp of approval, which we hope to receive within the next 2 weeks. I will provide more details about this project in the coming weeks.

The Hometown Heroes project is a long overdue initiative that shows our township's support for all the men and women who have served or are serving in our armed forces. We will kick off the application process this Veterans Day and collect applications during the winter months. The banners will be displayed from Memorial Day to Veterans Day, with more than 40 poles identified for this purpose.

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: Higgins
SECOND: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Heidi LeBris – expressed concern with the sign ordinance.

Steve Dunlop – questioned items on the bills list.

Ann Larson – expressed concern with the sign ordinance.

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: Sparta
SECOND: DeBenedetto

All members were in favor.

REVIEW OF BILLS LIST

The Council reviewed the bills list.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 12, 2024 – Regular Meeting

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the August 12, 2024 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor except Council Member Buccieri who abstained.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution #24-235: Amended Refund for Totally Disabled Veteran (Block 530 Lot 123 (Bundy)

Resolution #24-236: Resolution of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, Authorizing the Sale of Specific Equipment to Vandergrift Borough

Resolution #24-237: (Block 302 Lot 3 (Muniz) Cancelling Taxes for Total Disabled Veteran

Resolution #24-238: Authorizing Hometown Heroes Banner Program

Resolution #24-239: A Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a Discharge of Mortgage for Block 601 Lot 26 (fka Block 268.22 Lots 30, 31, 32)

Resolution #24-240: Resolution of the Township of Vernon Authoring the Award of #CC 3-2024 – Telecommunications System Software and Hardware Provider Through the Competitive Contracting Process

Resolution #24-241: Resolution Urging Congress to Allow Expiration of the Deductibility Cap of State and Local Taxes (SALT)

Resolution #24-242: A Resolution for Authorization for Submission of the Township of Vernon Chapter of the Sussex County Wastewater Management Plan to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:15-3.5(G)6

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: Higgins

A roll call vote was taken:

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

ABSENT:

Motion carries to approve the Consent Agenda.

RESOLUTION #24-235

**AMENDED REFUND FOR TOTALLY DISABLED VETERAN
(Block 530 Lot 123 (Bundy))**

WHEREAS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS awarded Kirsten Bundy 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 2024 property tax in the amount of \$485.11 to Kirsten Bundy.

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

RESOLUTION #24-236

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON,
COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AUTHORIZING
THE SALE OF SPECIFIC EQUIPMENT TO VANDERGRIFT BOROUGH**

WHEREAS, the Township has requested that the Township Council authorize the sale of equipment currently in the possession of Vernon Township to Vandergrift Borough and;

WHEREAS, such surplus items may be sold to any governmental unit in the United States in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-36 (2)

The contracting unit need not advertise for bids when it makes any such sale to the United States, the State of New Jersey, another contracting unit, any body politic to which it contributes tax raised funds, any foreign nation which has diplomatic relations with the United States, or any governmental unit in the United States.; and

WHEREAS, the Township Administration has reviewed a request which describes the aforesaid item, which is no longer needed for public use, to be sold at mutually agreed upon price of \$21,000.00:

2020 Extreme Vac Leaf Vacuum VIN# 1Z9PL1610LR168115

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. That the Township, Division of Purchasing, or its designee, be and hereby, is authorized to sell item as described.
2. The surplus property as identified shall be sold in an “as-is” condition without express or implied warranties with the successful bidder required to execute a Hold Harmless and Indemnification Agreement concerning use of said surplus property.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this Resolution will take effect immediately according to law.

RESOLUTION #24-237

**(Block 302 Lot 3 (Muniz))
CANCELLING TAXES FOR TOTAL DISABLED VETERAN**

WHEREAS THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS on awarded Paul Muniz 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 2024 in the amount of \$2,085.01

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

RESOLUTION #24-238

AUTHORIZING HOMETOWN HEROES BANNER PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon desires to offer the opportunity for the families to honor military personnel and veterans for their service by authorizing a Hometown Heroes Banner program as a living tribute for the family and the community to honor past and present members of the armed forces and their family members; and

WHEREAS, the Township has dedicated use of 75 light poles in the town center along Route 515, Route 94, Main Street and Church Street to be utilized for the program and will establish a waitlist for beyond 40 banners; and

WHEREAS, the nominator or a sponsor will provide for the cost of the banners.

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

- 1) It is hereby authorized to institute the Vernon Township Hometown Heroes Banner Program.
- 2) The Vernon Township Recreation Department is designated with the responsibility to advertise for, solicit sponsorships and process application for the banners.
- 3) The Recreation Department shall create an application for sponsors which shall contain at minimum the following information:
 - a) Name of Honoree
 - b) Rank
 - c) Era War or conflict served
 - d) Branch of service
 - e) Status (KIA/MIA/POW)
 - f) Medals (Purple Heart/ Silver Star, Bronze Star or other
 - g) Photo of Honoree at the time of service
- 4) Cost of the banner will be \$125 and is subject to change bases on current manufacturing pricing.
- 5) Anyone can sponsor a banner by paying the cost to be deposited in a dedicated trust for the program and used to offset a nominee unable to cover the cost.
- 6) The Recreation Director shall coordinate installation the banner with the Department of Public Works.
- 7) Sponsored banners shall be posted for 5 years or as long as the banners are in proper condition as determined by the Superintendent of Public Works; whichever is more. The Township, subject to the reason for the damage to the banner, may replace any banner as their discretion.
- 8) The Recreation Department shall maintain a waiting list.
- 9) Banners applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

- 10) Hometown Hero Banners will be displayed from, on or about May 15 of each year to on or about November 15 of each year.
- 11) Honorees or their family members sponsoring the banner must have a connection to Vernon Township at some time in their life.

RESOLUTION #24-239

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A DISCHARGE OF MORTGAGE FOR BLOCK 601 Lot 26 (fka Block 268.22 Lots 30, 31 & 32)

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon holds a mortgage for Raeline Kennedy and Kelli Yanez for the premises known as Block 601 Lot 26 (fka Block 268.22, Lots 30, 31, & 32) in conjunction with a dwelling renovation through the Vernon Township Housing Rehabilitation Program (“Mortgage”) administered in 2006; and

WHEREAS, Raeline Kennedy and Kelli Yanez have satisfied the Mortgage by payment to the Township of Vernon by way of check #014917 in amount of \$15,000.00 and therefore the Mortgage can now be discharged.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor is hereby authorized to sign a Discharge of Mortgage for Block 601 Lot 26 (fka Block 268.22, Lots 30, 31, & 32) and to have same filed with the Sussex County Recording Officer.

TOWNSHIP OF VERNON

RESOLUTION #24-240

Resolution of the Authorizing the Award of CC# 3-2024 – Telecommunications System Software and Hardware Provider Through the Competitive Contacting Process

WHEREAS, the Township has authorized the competitive contract procurement for Telecommunications System Software and Hardware Provider; and

WHEREAS, the Township received and opened in a public manner competitive contract responses on July 17, 2024, at 10:00 A.M.; and

WHEREAS, consistent with the bid terms, the Township established a rating committee and rated the submitted proposals in accordance with the term therein; and

WHEREAS, the Township received five (5) proposals; and

WHEREAS, A review committee completed a review of the submitted proposals and prepared a report, the terms of which are attached hereto and made part hereof, and which recommended award to Planet Networks, 4 Park Pl Newton, New Jersey, 07860; and

WHEREAS, Planet Networks, 4 Park Pl., Newton, New Jersey, 07860, has provided a proposal deemed responsive and responsible under the New Jersey Local Publics Contract Law (N.J.S.A.40A:11-1 et. Seq.,) as well as most advantageous based upon Price and Other Factors (N.J.A.C. 5:34-4); and

WHEREAS, it is the recommendation that the Township enter into an agreement for services under competitive contract with Planet Networks, 4 Park Pl., Newton, New Jersey, 07860 for a period of five (5) years under the terms and tenets as set forth in the competitive contract procurement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor is authorized to execute contract with Planet Networks, 4 Park Pl., Newton, New Jersey, 07860 for Telecommunications System Software and Hardware Provider, consistent with the foregoing, and upon terms subject to the review and approval of the Township Attorney.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township Clerk shall forward a certified copy of this Resolution to the Business Administrator; Chief Financial Officer; and Purchasing Agent.

RESOLUTION #24-241

Resolution Urging Congress to Allow Expiration of the Deductibility Cap of State and Local Taxes (SALT)

WHEREAS, our tax obligation is an issue that concerns all residents in every municipality in the state of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Acts of 2017 imposed a \$10,000 cap on state and local tax (SALT) deductions; and

WHEREAS, this cap is set to expire after the 2025 tax year; and

WHEREAS, the deduction for SALT has been a fundamental feature of the tax code for more than 100 years, with the first federal income tax form in 1913 allowing taxpayers to deduct state and local taxes, one of only six deductions allowed at the time, and even the federal Civil War tax in 1862 included a deduction for SALT; and

WHEREAS, this important provision ensures against double taxation and reflects mandatory tax payments, which support public services that benefit all citizens, such as K-12 schools, law enforcement and public safety, transportation and infrastructure, and vital community and public health services; and

WHEREAS, the SALT deduction is one of the few provisions in the federal tax code that recognizes the burden placed on states like New Jersey, which provide significantly more in federal tax revenue than they receive back in federal services and grants; and

WHEREAS, many New Jersey families relied upon the full federal SALT deduction to ensure tax fairness, and capping the SALT deduction has placed an unfair burden on New Jersey homeowners; and

WHEREAS, the SALT deduction cap presents a barrier to affordable homeownership in New Jersey, impacting the ability of new, young families to prosper in the future and seniors to remain in their homes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Congress should allow the expiration of the SALT deduction cap and provide more equitable taxation once again to residents of New Jersey; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to U.S. Senator Cory Booker, U.S. Senator George Helmy, Member of Congress for the Township of Vernon, Governor Phil Murphy, Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, Senator and Assembly Representatives for the Township of Vernon, and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

RESOLUTION #24-242

A RESOLUTION FOR AUTHORIZATION FOR SUBMISSION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON CHAPTER OF THE SUSSEX COUNTY WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN TO THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PURSUANT TO N.J.A.C. 7:15-3.5(G)6

WHEREAS, Dewberry Engineers has prepared a Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) for the Township of Vernon that complies with the 2016 Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) rules pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:15, Subchapter 3;

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon is located in the Highlands Region with land lying in both the Planning and Preservation Areas;

WHEREAS, each county and municipality in the State of New Jersey shall be subject to a WMP adopted by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection;

WHEREAS, the Sussex County PAC has become the County Wastewater Management Planning Agency;

WHEREAS, the Governing Body of the Township of Vernon, Sussex County, State of New Jersey has reviewed the draft WMP.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Governing Body consents to the submission of the Township of Vernon Chapter of the Sussex County WMP to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for review and adoption as required by the 2016 Water Quality Management Plan rules.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Ordinance #24-18: An Ordinance of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex and State of New Jersey Amending Certain Portions of Chapter 250 Entitled “Fees and Escrows” and Chapter 330 Entitled “Fees” of the Township Code

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #24-18.

MOVED: Higgins
SECOND: Buccieri

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #24-18.

Ordinance #24-19: Ordinance Amending the Vernon Township Municipal Code Chapter 428 “Peddling and Soliciting”

Council President Rizzuto asked for a motion to introduce ordinance #24-19.

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion carries to introduce ordinance #24-19.

ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES

Ordinance #24-17: An Ordinance of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon, County of Sussex and State of New Jersey Amending Certain Portions of Chapter 518 Entitled “Towing” of the Township Code

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to open the floor for public hearing on ordinance #24-17.

MOVED: Natalie
SECOND: Sparta

All members were in favor.

Seeing no one from the public wishing to come forward, President Rizzuto asked for a motion to close the public hearing on ordinance #24-17.

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Higgins

All members were in favor.

President Rizzuto asked for a motion to adopt ordinance #24-17.

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: DeBenedetto

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion carries to adopt ordinance #24-17.

ORDINANCE NO. 24-17

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON, COUNTY OF SUSSEX AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AMENDING CERTAIN PORTIONS OF CHAPTER 518 ENTITLED “TOWING” OF THE TOWNSHIP CODE

BE IT ORDAINED by the Township Council of the Township of Vernon in the County of Sussex and State of New Jersey that Chapter 518 Entitled “Towing,” of the Township Code are hereby amended as follows:

SECTION I. Chapter 518 entitled “Towing” is hereby amended, supplemented, and revised or by replacing same as follows:

§ 518-8. Service rates.

INITIAL TOW:

Day rate tow Light- Under 10,000 lbs. GVW - ~~\$125~~ \$155.00
Night rate tow Light -Under 10,000 lbs. GVW- ~~\$150~~ \$185.00
Day rate tow Med -Over 10,000 lbs. GVW \$310.00

Night rate tow Med – Over 10,000 lbs. GVW \$370.00

STORAGE PER DAY:

Motor vehicle outside - ~~\$50~~ \$60.00
Motor vehicle Inside - ~~\$75~~ \$100.00
Motorcycle Outside - ~~\$25~~ \$60.00
Motorcycle inside - ~~\$35~~ \$100.00
Trucks Single Axle/Dually outside \$125.00
Trucks Single Axle /Dually inside \$250.00

ROAD SIDE LABOR / SERVICE

Cars per hour - \$150.00
Trucks per hour - \$200.00

RECOVERY /WINCHING LABOR

Light/Med Under 16,000 lbs. GVW - \$350 per hour
Heavy Duty over 16, 000 lbs. GVW - \$650/per hour

SPECIALIZED RECOVERY

Trailers, Construction Equipment, ETC per hour (I hour Minimum) - \$400.00

SCENE LABOR

Clean Up per hour (one hour minimum includes absorbent) -\$75.00
Recovery Specialist/Level III Recovery Specialist per hour - \$250.00
Certified Towing Operator per hour - \$150.00
Laborer - \$125.00

ADDITIONAL CHARGES:

Mileage rate (one way) - ~~\$4.00~~ \$7.00 per mile
Administrative charge - ~~\$40~~ \$50.00
Yard/Documentation charge - ~~\$40~~ \$75.00
After Hours Release - \$85.00
Cover vehicle charge - ~~\$35~~ \$90 Car / \$250 Truck
Fuel Surcharge Per Mile – per Fuel Surcharge Percentage Chart below
Sub Contractor Mark Up – 20 %

Fuel cost	Fuel Surcharge Percentage
\$2.50	0%
\$3.00	1%
\$3.50	2%
\$4.00	3%
\$4.50	4%
\$5.00	5%
\$5.50	6%
\$6.00	7%
\$6.50	8%
\$7.00	9%
\$7.50	10%
\$8.00	11%

SECTION II. If any article, section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this Ordinance is, for any reason, held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the remaining portions of this Ordinance and they shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION III. In the event of any inconsistencies between the provisions of this Ordinance and any prior ordinance of the Township, the provisions hereof shall be determined to govern. All other

ordinances of the Township are hereby ratified and confirmed, except where inconsistent with the terms hereof.

SECTION IV. This Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon final passage and publication according to law.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to 5 Minutes Per Person)

MOVED: Buccieri
SECOND: Sparta

All members were in favor.

Jerard Conforti – expressed concern with JCP&L and the smart meters that were installed.

Thomas McClachrie – questioned resolutions on the agenda.

Ann Larsen – expressed concern with JCP&L and the smart meters that were installed.

Justin - expressed concern with JCP&L and the smart meters that were installed.

Odallas - expressed concern with JCP&L and the smart meters that were installed.

Kathy Whitty - expressed concern with JCP&L and the smart meters that were installed.

Steve Dunlop – expressed concern with the removal of the Jason Rinker memorial.

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

MOVED: Sparta
SECOND: Buccieri

All members were in favor.

Motion carries to close the floor to the public.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Higgins expressed concern with JCP&L and he will do whatever needs to be done to help. Council Member Higgins was happy to see the CFO at the meeting to answer questions.

Council Member DeBenedetto commented on the treatment of Ms. LoRe’ at the last Council meeting. She feels that it was inappropriate and an embarrassment. She hopes not to see anything like that at a meeting again. Council Member DeBenedetto was contacted by a wildlife sanctuary that is willing to help with wildlife education information.

Council Member Sparta had no comments.

Council Member Buccieri commented that her daughter Melody won the state poster for bus stop safety in the past.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Council President Rizzuto commented on past issues with JCP&L and that it took a lot of pressure to get the problems resolved. He suggests that we may have to go back to the heavy hammer. Council President Rizzuto reminded everyone that children are back at school and asked that everyone be careful on the roads with the school buses.

to put this behind us.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:15 pm Council Member Higgins 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 17, 2024