

**VERNON TOWNSHIP LAND USE BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 25, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Whitaker at 7:00 p.m.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE:

Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of this Regular Meeting has been provided to the public and the press on January 29, 2025, by delivering to the press such notice and posting same at the Municipal Building.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Vice Chairman Whitaker led the assemblage of the Flag.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Anthony Rossi	P	Also Present:
Natalie Buccieri	P	Glenn Kienz, Board Attorney
Councilmember William Higgins	P	Cory Stoner, Board Engineer
Martin Theobald	NP	Nick Meurer, Board Planner
Richard Spoerl	P	Kimberley Decker, Board Secretary
Willard McPeck	P	
Andrea Cocula	P	
Paul Mele	NP	
Michael Whitaker	P	
Jodi White-Bearstler Alt #1	P	
Mark Vizzini Alt #2	NP	
Marissa-Groenendaal-Poteete Alt #3	P	
Richard Wengenroth Alt #4	P	

Mr. Theobald and Mr. Mele notified the Board of their absence.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

LU# 1-26-1 – Board of Education – Capital Project Courtesy Review – Block 46, Lot 3, - Solar Photovoltaic System and Associated Improvements

Rob Simon, Attorney Warren NJ, came forward on behalf of the Vernon Board of Education to explain Solar agreement with Hess Solar to install Solar improvements at Vernon High School Parking Lots. Proposal is consistent with the Vernon Township Master Plan to support sustainable renewable energy initiatives. The winning bidder is Hess Solar, a company with expansive experience in the solar industry and who has worked with Boards of Educations, Municipalities and County organizations in New Jersey as well as many other states

Robert Moschello, 265 Main Street, Gladding, NJ Licensed Engineer came forward to explain proposal of Solar Improvements on 64.8-acre site known as Block 46 Lot 3, Vernon Township High School. Proposal is for Solar Canopy over existing parking lots, which have a grade, including 2.6 mw solar system with lighting of 4200 candles. The canopy will have a 14-foot clearance for adequate vehicle and

emergency vehicle maneuvering. Proposal will remove the existing large light stations that are 25 ft high and will be replaced with underneath LED lighting under canopy to provide illumination for spaces and lots. Nine trees will need to be removed on the upper portion in order for construction. There are no loss of parking spots on the site but due to ne solar foundations added to grass area, there is an increase to impervious coverage of 700 sq. ft. Proposal includes installation of conduit trenching to the mechanical room of the high school to connect to existing electric facilities. Mr. Moschello stated the proposal is not a major development with no environmental constraints.

Board Engineer Mr. Stoner expressed concern that proposal will double cost of paving projects of the parking lots in the future due to the low height of canopy.

Joseph Van Kirk, Board of Education (BOE) Director of Facilities was sworn in and acknowledged the Board Engineer's concern and will address issue with the BOE.

Mr. Stoner questioned how build up of snowfall will be managed between canopies and parked vehicles. Mr. Moschello stated there are no snow guards proposed and the angle of canopy is flatter so snow will melt steadily and not slide off. He added the electrical connection to the building is not yet finalized but will be provided to Board when complete.

Board Member expressed concern that proposed concrete foundations needed for solar canopy may be an issue with high school student drivers. Board questioned whether roof panels or grass areas were considered for solar. Mr. Van Kirk stated the roof needs to be replaced; making solar at this time not viable and ground areas would need major clearing.

Ms. Susan Brodie was sworn in to explain Solar Agreement. The length of the solar agreement is fifteen (15) years, and rate would save the BOE \$169,000.00 in the 1st year. After 15 years, the BOE have the option to extend contract, remove system, or buy system at fair market value. The Hess Solar company is funding the cost of the project.

Attorney Kienz stated the Public Hearing for the Board of Education is a Courtesy Review and a letter will need to be drafted that application is consistent with the Master Plan as it is green infrastructure, beneficial use of resources and will be cost efficient. Board approved letter to be written for file.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Vice Chairman Whitaker opened the meeting to the Public

Kirk Stephens stated understanding that the Land Use Board executes existing policies approved by the Township Council and adopted into Code but questions what triggers the update to the Master Plan.

Attorney Kienz stated Master Plan updates are done once every ten years and funds to do so must be budgeted by Council. He commented that Vernon is very progressive at review of zoning compared to other towns but noted times are difficult right now with school numbers down and not much development being proposed. Mr. Stoner stated Master Plan updates start at the Council level, then are referred to the Land Use Board for review.

Kirk Stephens stated he is speaking for many members of public who are concerned with the Town Center zoning and current proposed projects of high density residential. He added that Town Center Redevelopment Plan noted many run-down building in need but now those sites have been improved by private parties without significant incentives showing need for Plan updates. Mr. Stephens acknowledged his efforts need to be refocused to Township Council.

LAND USE BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS (ACTION MAY OR MAY NOT BE TAKEN)

- **ORDINANCE #26-05 – ORDINANCE TO REPEAL AND REPLACE EXISTING CHAPTER 133, “AFFORDABLE HOUSING” OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON**
- **Ordinance #26-06 – ORDINANCE TO REPEAL AND REPLACE THE EXISTING ARTICLE XIV, “AFFORDABLE HOUSING” OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON**

Nick Meurer, Associate Planner with Caldwell Associates was sworn in and explained Ordinance #26-05 is an Administrative update for compliance measures of the Affordable Housing Plan to bring code current with State Law Fair Housing Act per Court Order. Ordinance #26-05 Repeals and Replaces Chapter 133 in the Township Code updating the definitions and standards per current COAH law. The Ordinance does not increase density on sites but is Administrative in nature. Ordinance #26-06 repeals and replaces the fee structure within the Township Ordinance to reflect the current COAH regulations per State law. Ordinance allows for Township to retain local control of funds collected to be used for future rehabilitation projects, rental assistance or assistance for lower income housing.

Attorney Kienz noted Ordinances are for procedural purposes and not for land use policy.

Mr. Meurer noted Ordinances are substantially consistent with the Master Plan with no recommendations needed.

Ms. Buccieri made a motion to forward Board Comments to the Township Council and was seconded by Ms. Cocula.

ROLL CALL: ROSSI: Y; BUCCIERI: Y; HIGGINS: Y; SPOERL: Y; MCPEEK: Y; COCULA: Y; WHITE-BEARSTLER: Y; POTEETE: Y; WHITAKER: Y. Motion Passed.

MINUTES

- **January 28, 2026 – Reorganization Meeting Minutes (Auberger, Buccieri, Higgins, Spoerl, McPeek, Cocula, Mele, Whitaker, White-Bearstler)**
- **January 28, 2026 – Regular Meeting Minutes (Auberger, Buccieri, Higgins, Spoerl, McPeek, Cocula, Mele, Whitaker, White-Bearstler)**

Motion: A motion to approve Reorganization and Regular Minutes of January 28, 2026 was made by Mr. Spoerl and was seconded by Mr. McPeek.

ROLL CALL: BUCCIERI: Y; HIGGINS: Y; SPOERL: Y; MCPEEK: Y; COCULA: Y; WHITAKER: Y; WHITE-BEARSTLER: Y. Motion Passed.

APPENDIX A – ESCROWS, BOARD FEES, BOND REDUCTIONS AND ESCROW CLOSURE

ESCROWS, BOARD FEES AND BOND REDUCTIONS

A. Board Fees

- 1. Board Attorney – Glenn Kienz, Weiner Law Group LLP**
 - **Land Use Board Business – (\$0)**
 - **O’Neil Group 517 – LU# 6-25-4 – Services Through 1/6/26 (\$252.00)**

2. **Board Planner** – Jessica Caldwell, J. Caldwell & Associates
 - Land Use Board Business – Services Through 1/16/26 (\$155.00)

3. **Board Engineer** – Cory Stoner, Harold E. Pellow & Associates
 - Land Use Board Business – (\$0)

 - Red Hand LLC – LU# 2-25-1 – Services Through 11/24/25 (\$652.50)

4. **Board Recording Secretary** – Irene Mills (\$100.00)

Motion: Motion to Approve Fees to be paid was made by Ms. Cocula and was seconded by Ms. White-Bearstler. All Members voted in Favor. Motion Passed.

Vice Chairman stated letters will be sent out to former Land Use Board Members Haley and Larsen thanking them for their service.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no more board business, a motion was made to adjourn the Regular meeting by Ms. White-Bearstler and was seconded by Mr. McPeck. All members were in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Irene Mills, Recording Secretary