

September 15, 2020

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APPROVED MINUTES
VERNON TOWN COUNCIL
VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING

TELECONFERENCE CALL IN NUMBER: 1-929-205-6099

MEETING ID: 886 4996 3880 PASSWORD: 0915

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2020 – 7:30 PM

Mayor Daniel A. Champagne called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM.

A.) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited

B.) ROLL CALL

Present: Council Members Laura Bush, Julie Clay, Thomas DiDio, Linda Gessay, Ann Letendre, Maryann Levesque, Pauline Schaefer, Jim Tedford, Steve Wakefield and Michael Wendus

Absent:

Entered During Virtual Regular Meeting at 7:33PM: Brian Motola, Bill Campbell

Also Present: Town Administrator Michael J. Purcaro, Recording Secretary Kathleen Minor

C.) CITIZEN'S FORUM

- David Derosier – 96 Franklin Park West, Vernon spoke regarding the Vernon Housing Authority
- Ian Mills, Franklin Park, PO Box 165, Vernon spoke regarding the Vernon Housing Authority
- Maryann Levesque, 183 Bolton Road, Vernon spoke regarding wearing a mask during COVID-19
- Michael Wendus, 91 Village Street, Vernon spoke and thanked the Town Administration and staff for their efforts during the pandemic

E.) PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

F.) PRESENTATIONS BY THE ADMINISTRATION

Mayor Daniel A. Champagne presented the following updates to the Town Council:

- The Summer Meal Program operated by the Vernon Youth Services Bureau provided 13,934 lunches and 13,934 breakfasts this summer and were distributed via a drive-thru system and did not require the children to be present. This was a significant increase from 2019 (approximately 9,000 more lunches and 12,000 more breakfasts).
- A reminder to participate in the 2020 U.S. Census.
- Ocean State Job Lot, located at 295 Hartford Turnpike opened on Thursday, August 27, 2020 and they also donated 1600 KN95 face masks, 3,000 Surgical Masks, 20 gallons of hand sanitizer, 15 digital thermometers and plastic face shields to the Town of Vernon first responders. Get Fresh Laundromat, located at 40 West Main Street opened on Tuesday, September 1, 2020.
- The Town closed on the Ellington Fields Project on September 14, 2020. Additional information will follow regarding Phase 1 of this project.
- The Planning Department is working on the Plan of Conservation and Development. Upcoming activities include a community-wide survey and ongoing virtual meetings with key stakeholders.

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- The long time Vernon business Ladd and Hall has announced their closing. Ladd and Hall Furniture has been in operation since 1937.
- The Town is nearing completion at the Gene Pitney Memorial Park at 19 Grove Street. The Department of Public Works and Parks and Recreation Department have been doing the majority of the work related to the site and it will be open soon.

Town Administrator and Director of Emergency Management and Incident Commander Michael J. Purcaro presented the following updates regarding the disaster declarations that are still in effect regarding COVID-19 and Tropical Storm Isaias to the Town Council:

- The recovery phase continues with damage assessment due to the tropical storm. A regional representative from FEMA has been assigned to Vernon and has participated in calls and discussion.
- Expenses are being tracked for both disasters and the town is actively seeking reimbursement – \$140,000 has been expended due to the tropical storm and an estimation of \$175,000 due to COVID-19.
- The local Recovery and Reopening Advisory Committee recently included the Board of Education administrative staff as guest speakers to discuss the school re-opening plan and give an update on the first week. Paul Listro, a local nursing home owner, also participated discussing his experiences and those of nursing homes state wide regarding the response to COVID-19. Dr Sexton, the new EMS director at ECHN was invited to join the next meeting.
- The Library and Senior Center have re-opened within the current guidelines.
- Governor Ned Lamont, Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz and State Education Commissioner Dr Miguel Cardona visited Skinner Road School recently and our town was highlighted as a model district regarding the re-opening plan.
- Testing for COVID-19 continues weekly at the Vernon Senior Center and St Bernards Church and as an enhancement to this drive-thru testing, flu vaccinations will now be expanded to the community.
- The town has sponsored 5 regional blood drives, with 2 more scheduled. The American Red Cross has reported that 481 units of blood have been collected, which is approximately 70 gallons of life saving blood.

Mayor Champagne commented that the Senior Center is open, but currently for medical appointments only.

Mayor Champagne introduced David Owens, Communication Specialists to the group. David spoke regarding his background and his immediate focus and priorities.

Robert Grasis, Director of Water Pollution Control, presented an update regarding the facility upgrade project and responded to questions and comments.

In recognition of Constitution Week, September 17 – September 23, Mayor Champagne presented a Proclamation for the Daughters of the American Revolution. State Vice Regent Patrice Buxton was on the call representing DAR and accepted on behalf.

~~Presentation by Catherine Marx, Partnership Specialist representing U.S. Census Bureau relative to the ongoing 2020 U.S. Census.~~

G.) ACTION ON CONSENT AGENDA

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to move the Consent Agenda. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

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- C 1. Request the Town Council approve Tax Refunds for Prior and Current year.** (See copy of a memorandum from Terry Hjarne, Collector of Revenue, to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator dated August 31, 2020 included in the Council packet.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES EIGHT (8) FOR PRIOR YEAR REFUNDS TOTALING \$1,248.49 AND SIXTY-THREE (63) CURRENT YEAR TAX REFUNDS TOTALING \$9,510.43 AS REFERENCED IN THE LETTER FROM TERRY HJARNE, COLLECTOR OF REVENUE TO MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR DATED AUGUST 31, 2020.

H.) DISCUSSION OF PULLED CONSENT ITEM(S)

None

I.) PENDING BUSINESS

None

J.) NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Request the Town Council authorize the asset disposal for the Rockville Public Library, Vernon Police Department and the Vernon Data Processing Department.** (See memorandum dated September 8, 2020 from Jeffrey A. O'Neill, Finance Officer & Treasurer to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE DISPOSAL OF FIXED ASSETS FOR THE ROCKVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY, POLICE AND DATA PROCESSING DEPARTMENTS AS DISCLOSED ON THE REQUEST FOR DISPOSAL OF FIXED ASSET FORMS.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to approve the disposal of fixed assets for the Rockville Public Library, Police Department and Data Processing Department. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

- 2. Request the Town Council approve an additional appropriation for Security Enhancements at the Gene Pitney Memorial Park and Grove Hill Cemetery.** (See memorandum dated September 9, 2020 from Jeffrey A. O'Neill, Finance Officer and Treasurer to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

RESOLVED, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES BUDGET AMENDMENT REQUEST #2 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 AS PROVIDED BY JEFFREY A. O'NEILL, FINANCE OFFICER AND TREASURER, ON THE ATTACHED BUDGET AMENDMENT FORM.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to a approve additional appropriations for security enhancements at the Gene Pitney Memorial Park and Grove Hill Cemetery. Mayor Champagne spoke and answered questions. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

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- 3. Request the Town Council authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne to execute any and all documents relative to the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Grant in the amount of \$14,644.50.**

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL AUTHORIZES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE TO EXECUTE ALL NECESSARY PAPERWORK TO MAKE APPLICATION FOR AND RECEIVE FFY 2020 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE GRANT (EMPG) FUNDING OFFERED BY THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$14,644.50.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Campbell, made a motion to execute any and all documents relative to the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Grant in the amount of \$14,644.50. Town Administrator and Director of Emergency Management and Incident Commander Michael J. Purcaro spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

- 4. Request the Town Council consider Town Council Member Tom Didio's agenda item relative to Town Council audio/visual virtual format.** (See email and proposed motion from Mr. Didio for consideration.)

PROPOSED MOTION

ALL FUTURE REMOTE TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS SHALL BE AVAILABLE IN AUDIO/VISUAL VIRTUAL FORMAT BY ZOOM, GOOGLE MEETING OR OTHER WIDELY AVAILABLE FORMAT.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion for all future remote meetings be available in audio/visual virtual format. Mayor Daniel Champagne commented regarding current format. Council Member Didio spoke. Discussion ensued. Motion failed by roll call vote with 4 in favor and 8 opposed (Bush, Campbell, Clay, Gessay, Motola, Tedford, Wakefield, Wendus).

- 5. Request the Town Council consider Town Council Member Tom Didio's agenda item relative to amending the previously passed Social Media Policy.** (See email and proposed motion from Mr. Didio for consideration. Also included for Council reference is the current Social Media Policy as passed at the Town Council August 18, 2020 meeting.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AMENDS THE CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AS FOLLOWS:

EMPLOYEES HAVE A RIGHT TO COMMENT PUBLICLY AS CITIZENS ON "MATTERS OF PUBLIC CONCERN", SUCH AS ISSUES OF SOCIAL OR POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OR OTHER COMMUNITY TOPICS. EXAMPLES OF SUCH "PROTECTED SPEECH" ARE DISCOURSE ABOUT THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES, MISCONDUCT IN OFFICE,

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MISMANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS, OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT BREACHES OF PUBLIC TRUST. SPEECH STRICTLY ABOUT INTERNAL OPERATIONS OR JOB DUTIES IS NOT PROTECTED.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to amend the current social media policy with additional language proposed by Council Member Didio. Council Member Didio spoke regarding the proposed amendment. Assistant Town Administrator Dawn Maselek spoke and answered questions. Town Administrator Michael J Purcaro spoke. Discussion ensued. Motion failed by roll call vote with 5 in favor and 7 opposed (Bush, Campbell, Clay, Gessay, Tedford, Wakefield, Wendus).

6. **Request the Town Council authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne to execute the necessary paperwork to make application for and receive September, 2020 – June 2021 School Readiness Funds in the amount of \$294,434.24.** (See memorandum from Michelle Hill, Youth Services Director to Michael J. Purcaro, Youth Services Director relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

REQUEST THE TOWN COUNCIL AUTHORIZE MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE TO EXECUTE ALL NECESSARY PAPERWORK TO MAKE APPLICATION FOR AND RECEIVE SEPTEMBER, 2020-JUNE, 2021 SCHOOL READINESS FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$294,434.24.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne to execute all necessary paperwork to make application for and receive September, 2020 – June, 2021 school readiness funds in the amount of \$294,434.24. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

7. **Request the Town Council approve change in seasonal wages as presented by Dawn R. Maselek, Assistant Town Administrator.** (See memorandum dated September 10, 2020 from Dawn R. Maselek, Assistant Town Administrator to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE NEW WAGE TABLE FOR SEASONAL EMPLOYEES AS PRESENTED.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to approve the new wage table for seasonal employees as presented. Assistant Town Administrator Dawn Maselek spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried with 11 in favor by roll call vote; a vote by Council Member Schaefer was inaudible.

8. **Request the Town Council approve an addition appropriation to cover expenses related to preparation and paving of the Parks Maintenance Garage area at Henry Park.** (See budget amendment submitted by Marty Sitler, Director of Parks and Recreation and Jeffrey A. O'Neill, Finance Officer and Treasurer for your review.)

PROPOSED MOTION

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RESOLVED, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES BUDGET AMENDMENT REQUEST #3 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 AS PROVIDED BY JEFFREY A. O'NEILL, FINANCE OFFICER AND TREASURER, ON THE ATTACHED BUDGET AMENDMENT FORM.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion approve additional appropriation to cover expenses related to preparation and paving of the Parks Maintenance Garage area at Henry Park. Mayor Daniel Champagne spoke. Marty Sitler, Director of Parks and Recreation spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried with 11 in favor by roll call; a vote by Council Member Schaefer was inaudible.

9. **Request the Town Council approve the job description for *Building Maintainer Mason* for the Department of Public Works.** (See job description attached.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL, CONSISTENT WITH THE TOWN OF VERNON PERSONNEL RULES AND REGULATIONS, SECTION 4.1 (B) ENTITLED "JOB DESCRIPTIONS", HEREBY ADOPTS THE JOB DESCRIPTION OF ***BUILDING MAINTAINER MASON*** FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Campbell, made a motion to approve the job description for Building Maintainer Mason for the Department of Public Works. Mayor Champagne spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

K.) INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

L.) ACTION ON ORDINANCE(S) PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED

None

M.) IDENTIFICATION/ADOPTION OF ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to add the third Executive Session item regarding discussion of property acquisition to the agenda. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

D.) EXECUTIVE SESSION

9:30PM – Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made the following motion to go into Executive Session#1:

THE TOWN COUNCIL PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY GIVEN IN CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES 1-200 (6) (B) HEREBY MOVES TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS A POTENTIAL SETTLEMENT RELATED TO ***KING V TOWN OF VERNON FILE NO. 0135028*** AND INVITES MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, DAWN MASELEK, ASSISTANT TOWN ADMINISTRATOR AND ATTORNEY RICHARD BARTLETT OF THE LAW FIRM MCGANN, BARTLETT AND BROWN TO ATTEND.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

9:48PM – Executive Session #1 ended.

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Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to hereby agree to the full and final settlement as presented in the matter of King V Town of Vernon File No. 0135028 to resolve said claim. Once the settlement is executed, it will become public. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

9:51PM – Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Bush, made the following motion to go into Executive Session #2:

THE TOWN COUNCIL PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY GIVEN IN CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES 1-200 (2) HEREBY MOVES TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS A PERSONNEL MATTER AND INVITES MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, AND DAWN MASELEK, ASSISTANT TOWN ADMINISTRATOR TO ATTEND.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

9:52PM -Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to extend meeting past curfew. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

10:04PM – Executive Session #2 ended.

No action taken on Executive Session #2.

10:06PM – Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer made the following motion to go into Executive Session #3:

THE TOWN COUNCIL PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY GIVEN IN CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES 1-200 (6) (D) HEREBY MOVES TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND INVITES ATTORNEY LOUIS SPADACCINI, MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR AND SHAUN GATELY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR TO ATTEND.

10:33PM – Executive Session #3 ended.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion for the Town Council to make application to a Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Brownfield Remediation and Liability Relief Program for the parcel identified as 98 East Main Street, Parcel ID: 40-0117-00005. Further, the Town Council moves to accept the parcel in lieu of back taxes pending a positive §8-24 review by the Planning and Zoning Commission and acceptance into a Brownfield Remediation and Liability Relief Program. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

N.) DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL ITEMS AND INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None

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O.) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

THE TOWN COUNCIL WAIVES THE READING OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING ON **AUGUST 18, 2020** AND THAT MINUTES OF SAID MEETING BE APPROVED.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to waive the reading of and approve the minutes as corrected of the virtual regular Town Council meeting held on August 18, 2010. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

P.) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS, PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, CORRESPONDENCE, REPORTS, ETC. NOT REQUIRING ACTION

1. Monthly Report for July, 2020, Town Clerk's Office, as submitted by Karen C. Daigle, Vernon Town Clerk.
2. Monthly Report for August, 2020, Vernon Police Department, as submitted by John Kelley, Captain of Police.

Q.) ADJOURN (10:26PM)

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Received: September 23, 2020

Approved: October 6, 2020

Respectfully Submitted.



Kathleen Minor
Recording Secretary