

August 18, 2020

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**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**VERNON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING**

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

MEETING ID: 893 6346 1179 PASSWORD: 0818

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2020 - 7:30 PM**

Mayor Daniel A. Champagne called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

**A.) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Recited

**B.) ROLL CALL**

Present: Council Members Laura Bush, Bill Campbell, 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: Brian Motola at 7:33PM

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

**C.) CITIZEN'S FORUM**

- Thomas DiDio, 112 Box Mountain Drive, spoke regarding the tropical storm response efforts
- ~~Maryanne~~ Maryann Levesque, 183 Bolton Road, spoke regarding the tropical storm response efforts
- Genaro Gonzalez, 59 High Street, spoke regarding various topics
- Father Rick Ricard, 25 St Bernard Terrace, spoke regarding the related agenda item

**D.) EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

**E.) PUBLIC HEARINGS**

None

**F.) PRESENTATIONS BY THE ADMINISTRATION**

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

- Attorney Martin Burke has retired from his position as Assistant Town Attorney
- A re-opening plan for the Rockville Public Library is being worked on.
- A \$12,324 rebate from Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA) was awarded. To date, the Town and the Board of Education have received a combined \$153,846 in distributed rebates
- The town participated in the USDA Federal Farmers to Families Food Program distributing 12,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables using various agencies and resources to deliver and distribute
- The Mayor's Summer 2020 Concert Series received rave reviews and was enjoyed by all
- The town-wide, multi-function copiers that have been contracted with Ryan Business Services were installed in all departments including the Board of Education. The progress and savings during this four year contract will be tracked and reported quarterly.
- Progress continues on the Safe Routes to School Project with 5 bids received and reviewed. Street improvements in the vicinity of Dart Hill, Talcottville and Loveland Hill Roads and includes refining safety conditions for bicycling and walking to school, and proposed improvements to sidewalks, walkways, handicap ramps and signage.

August 18, 2020

- Dwight Ryniewicz, Director of Public Works, proactively identified better pricing for treated salt and propane resulting in a cost savings of \$24,540 for salt and \$3,087.61 for propane for FY21.
- A five-year tiered agreement for municipal refuse and recycling services with Willimantic Waste Paper, Inc. that will save \$43,775 for FY21.
- A savings of \$3,701.65 by using in house staff to for HVAC work at the Police Department.
- The new Communication Specialist, David Owens, will begin with his career with the Town of Vernon on August 24, 2020.

Town Administrator and Director of Emergency Management and Incident Commander Michael J. Purcaro presented the following updates to the Town Council:

- Tropical Storm Isaias was handled as a team effort with multiple town departments and staff. The Town is still in the recovery phase and an on-going damage assessment is underway. In support of the state's effort for the Federal Disaster Declaration, an email, [isaias@vernon-ct.gov](mailto:isaias@vernon-ct.gov), has been established for public sharing to document damage.
- The Local Recovery Advisory Committee meets and invited the Superintendent of Schools and a Physician Assistant from Primary Urgent Care in Ellington to the recent meeting to participate and keep the group as informed as possible.
- The Board of Education has announced hybrid re-opening plan was announced this week and communication was shared with all Vernon families.
- The Governor's office released an interim report received from Mathematica Policy Research detailing their primary assessment of the COVID-19 response in Connecticut's long-term facilities.
- The Milan Cultural Association distributed free face masks and hand sanitizer to the public and our local community.
- Updates to internal policies and procedures as well as training to the department heads and staff are on-going to ensure compliance with new executive orders and the travel restrictions.
- To date, there have been 926 COVID-19 tests administered, including both viral swab and antibody blood tests, through the weekly drive thru and walk up testing at St Bernard's and the Vernon Senior Center, as well as testing for staff at Priority Urgent Care in Ellington.
- Rapid testing capacity for our front line first responders has been recently introduced through Priority Urgent Care. After careful selection of a vendor, testing equipment was chosen that shows a 95% plus accuracy and is offered weekly for staff that are most at risk.
- A federal vaccine initiative led by the United States Dept of Health and Human Services and Dept of Defense involving a public private partnership has a goal of producing 300 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine by January 2021 with anticipation of an additional 3 months for distribution to the public.
- In preparation of the upcoming influenza season, the vaccine program for our employees will be ramped up to ensure access to the flu vaccine. An additional component to expand a community vaccination program is being explored as well.

Mayor Champagne stated that an amended Social Media Policy was sent to all Town Council members via electronic mail this afternoon.

August 18, 2020

The Rockville Public Library volunteer Poet Laureate, Pegi Dietz Shea recited a poem she wrote relative to the recent storm.

**G.) ACTION ON CONSENT AGENDA**

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to move the Consent Agenda. Council Member Clay pulled C-1. Council Member Campbell pulled C-4. Motion to approve C-2 and C-3 carried unanimously by roll call vote.

**C-2 Request the Town Council approve Tax Refunds for Prior and Current years.**

(See copy of a memorandum from Terry Hjarne, Collector of Revenue, to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator dated August 6, 2020 included in the Council packet.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES SEVEN (7) PRIOR YEAR TAX REFUNDS TOTALING \$1214.17 AND FOUR (4) CURRENT YEAR TAX REFUNDS TOTALING \$1163.73 AS REFERENCED IN THE MEMORANDUM FROM TERRY HJARNE, COLLECTOR OF REVENUE TO MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR DATED AUGUST 6, 2020.

**C-3 Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of Officer Gregory St. Pierre, of the Vernon Police Department, 725 Hartford Turnpike, Vernon, Connecticut, as the Staff Liaison to the Vernon Youth Services Advisory Board, said term to commence on August 19, 2020 and expires December 31, 2020.** (Officer Gregory St. Pierre will be completing the unexpired term of the previous Liaison Officer.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

PURSUANT TO CHARTER CHAPTER XV, SECT. 3; TOWN COUNCIL RESOLUTION DATED 08-24-1976 AND TOWN COUNCIL RESOLUTION DATED 03-01-1994, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF OFFICER GREGORY ST. PIERRE, OF THE VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT, 725 HARTFORD TURNPIKE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AS THE STAFF LIAISON TO THE VERNON YOUTH SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD, SAID TERM TO COMMENCE ON AUGUST 19, 2020 AND EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2020.

**H.) DISCUSSION OF PULLED CONSENT ITEM(S)**

**C-1 Request the Town Council approve budget amendments #37, #38, #39, #40, #41, #42, #43, #44 and #45 for fiscal year 2019-2020 as provided by Finance Officer and Treasurer Jeffrey A. O'Neill on the budget amendment forms attached.** (See budget amendment forms with explanation attached to this agenda.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

RESOLVED, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES BUDGET AMENDMENT REQUESTS **#37, #38, #39, #40, #41, #42, #43, #44 AND #45** FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 AS PROVIDED BY FINANCE OFFICER AND TREASURER JEFFREY A. O'NEILL ON THE BUDGET AMENDMENT FORMS ATTACHED.

August 18, 2020

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to move Consent Agenda C-1. Jeffrey O'Neill, Finance Director and Treasurer, answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

**C-4 Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of Ian C. Mills, (U), Franklin Park, Franklin Street, P.O. Box 165, Vernon, Connecticut 06066 as a Tenant Commissioner to the Housing Authority of the Town of Vernon, said term to commence August 19, 2020 and expires February 28, 2025.** (A copy of Mr. Mills resume is included for Council review. See correspondence from Betsy Soto, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the Town of Vernon dated August 12, 2020 to Mayor Daniel A. Champagne relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 8, SECTION 5 OF THE VERNON TOWN CHARTER THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF IAN C. MILLS, (U), FRANKLIN PARK, FRANKLIN STREET, P.O. BOX 165, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AS A TENANT COMMISSIONER TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE TOWN OF VERNON, SAID TERM TO COMMENCE ON AUGUST 19, 2020 AND EXPIRES FEBRUARY 28, 2025.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Clay, made a motion to move Consent Agenda C-4. Town Administrator Purcaro spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Council Member DiDio requested that more detail regarding the appointment recommendation be provided in the future. Motion failed 0 in favor and 10 against with 2 abstentions (Didio and Letendre).

**I.) PENDING BUSINESS**

None

**J.) NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. Request the Town Council approve the Vernon Republican Town Committee nomination of E. Mason Thrall, III to fill the vacant seat on the Vernon Board of Education created by the resignation of Linda B. Gessay.** (See letter dated August 13, 2020 from Robert Hurd, Chairman of the Vernon Republican Town Committee to Mayor Daniel A. Champagne confirming the party's endorsement of Mr. Thrall.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

RESOLVED, THE VERNON TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY ENDORSES THE NOMINATION OF E. MASON THRALL, III, (R), 172 IRENE DRIVE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT TO REPLACE LINDA B. GESSAY ON THE VERNON BOARD OF EDUCATION, SAID TERM TO COMMENCE AUGUST 18, 2020 AND ENDING NOVEMBER 8, 2021.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to endorse the nomination of E. Mason Thrall, III, (R), 172 Irene Drive, Vernon to replace Linda B. Gessay

August 18, 2020

on the Vernon Board of Education, said term to commence August 18, 2020 and end November 8, 2021. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously with roll call vote.

- 2. Request the Town Council accept final conveyance of Jen Drive, Vernon, Connecticut from Woodland Place, LLC and developer Kenneth J. Boynton.** (See memorandum from George K. McGregor, Town Planner to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to the CGS 8-24 review completed by the Vernon Planning and Zoning Commission on August 6, 2020.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL APPROVES THE ACCEPTANCE OF JEN DRIVE, OPEN SPACE, AND SEWER EASEMENTS AS REQUESTED.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Clay, made a motion to approve the acceptance of Jen Drive, Open Space, and sewer easements as requested. Town Planner George McGregor spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motioned carried with 11 in favor and 1 abstention (Bush) by roll call vote.

- 3. Request the Town Council authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne to apply for and receive the Fiscal Year 2020 State Homeland Security Grant.** (See memorandum dated August 11, 2020 from Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator and Emergency and Risk Management Director to Mayor Daniel A. Champagne and the Vernon Town Council relative to same.)

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AUTHORIZES THE TOWN OF VERNON TO ENTER INTO AND DELIVER TO THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION, DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS WHICH IT DEEMS TO BE NECESSARY OR APPROPRIATE ; AND **FUTHER RESOLVED**, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AUTHORIZES DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE, AS MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF VERNON, TO EXECUTE AND DELIVER ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF VERNON AND TO DO AND PERFORM ALL ACTS AND THINGS WHICH HE DEEMS TO BE NECESSARY OR APPROPRIATE TO CARRY OUT THE TERMS OF SUCH DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, EXECUTING AND DELIVERING ALL AGREEMENTS AND DOCUMENTS CONTEMPLATED BY SUCH DOCUMENTS.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Campbell, made a motion to authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne to apply for and receive the Fiscal Year 2020 State Homeland Security Grant. Town Administrator Purcaro spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

- 4. Request the Town Council authorize the disposal of fixed assets for Information Technology, Public Works, Engineering, Planning, Building and Cemetery Departments as disclosed on the Fixed Asset request forms provided in the Town**

August 18, 2020

**Council packet.** (See memorandum from Jeffrey A. O'Neill, Finance Officer & Treasurer dated August 10, 2020 to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE DISPOSAL OF FIXED ASSETS FOR THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, PUBLIC WORKS, ENGINEERING, PLANNING, BUILDING AND CEMETERY DEPARTMENTS AS DISCLOSED ON THE REQUEST FOR DISPOSAL OF FIXED ASSET FORMS.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion to authorize the disposal of fixed assets for Information Technology, Public Works, Engineering, Planning, Building and Cemetery departments as disclosed. Motion carried unanimously with roll call vote.

- 5. Request the Town Council authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne to execute any and all documents to make application for and receive Local Prevention Council Grant funds in the amount of \$5342.00.** (See memorandum from Michelle Hill, Youth Services Director to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AUTHORIZES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE TO MAKE APPLICATION FOR AND RECEIVE LOCAL PREVENTION COUNCIL GRANT FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$5342.00.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion to authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne to make application for and receive local prevention council grant funds in the amount of \$5,342.00. Michelle Hill, Youth Services Director spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

- 6. Request the Town Council approve the policy entitled "SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY".** (See the policy document included in the Council packet for review.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE POLICY ENTITLED "**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**", AS PRESENTED.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to approve the policy entitled "Social Media Policy" as amended. Assistant Town Administrator Dawn Maselek spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried with 8 in favor, 3 opposed (DiDio, Letendre, Levesque) and 1 abstention (Schaefer) by roll call vote.

- 7. Request the Town Council consider the request submitted by The Parish of The Blessed Sacrament at St. Bernard's Church to waive all permitting fees.** (See letter from Rev. Richard J. Rivard, Pastor dated June 19, 2020 to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

August 18, 2020

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE WAIVER OF PERMITTING FEES AS REQUESTED.

Council Member Wakefield, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, made a motion for the Town Council to approve the waiving of building permitting fees as requested. 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**

None

**N.) DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL ITEMS AND INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

None

**O.) ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

THE TOWN COUNCIL WAIVES THE READING OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING ON **JULY 21, 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 of the virtual regular Town Council meeting held on July 21, 2020. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

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

1. Monthly Report – July 2020 Vernon Police Department as submitted by Capitan John Kelley.

**Q.) ADJOURN (8:52PM)**

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

Received: September 9, 2020

Approved: September 23, 2020

Respectfully Submitted.



Kathleen Minor  
Recording Secretary