

# TOWN OF VERNON

## Office of the Mayor

14 Park Place • Vernon, CT 06066

Tel: (860) 870-3600 • Fax: (860) 870-3580

[www.Vernon-CT.gov](http://www.Vernon-CT.gov)



**Daniel A. Champagne**  
*Mayor*

**Michael J. Purcaro**  
*Town Administrator*

**Dawn R. Maselek**  
*Assistant Town Administrator*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 5, 2023

#### Press Contact:

David Owens, Communications Specialist

Desk (860) 870-3574

Cell (860) 494-5973

## Mayor Champagne, Vernon Town Council Enhance Stipends for Vernon Volunteer Firefighters

***Goal of Program is to Increase Firefighter Turnout and Help Recruit and Retain Volunteers***

**(VERNON, Connecticut)** – To reward Vernon’s volunteer firefighters and support the department’s efforts to recruit new members, the Vernon Town Council on Tuesday unanimously approved a plan to enhance the quarterly stipends firefighters receive.

All active firefighters qualify for length of service awards, which are similar to pensions and are based on years of active service to the department. Firefighters also receive quarterly stipends that are based on a firefighter’s level of participation.

“Our volunteer firefighters do so much for our community and we are grateful for their service,” Mayor Dan Champagne said. “Keeping our fire department properly staffed is increasingly challenging as volunteerism across the board has declined. These enhanced stipends demonstrate to our firefighters the value we place on their work and our continued gratitude for their service.”

Mayor Champagne tasked Fire Chief Stephen Eppler and his command staff to establish an advisory committee representing a diverse cross section of the department to examine the stipend program and to develop recommendations that would enhance and preserve the volunteer system. Mayor Champagne took that recommendation, worked with town staff to further develop it, and then presented it to the Town Council.

Under the new plan, firefighters’ quarterly payments can be enhanced in three ways.

- **Incident Response Enhancement:** Firefighters will receive \$5 for each call they respond to between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., and \$8 for each call they respond to between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

- **Certification Enhancement:** Firefighters who earn *Firefighter 1* certification will receive a \$100 quarterly enhancement, those who earn *Firefighter 2* will receive \$200 quarterly, and those who receive *Fire Officer* certification will receive a \$300 enhancement per quarter.
- **Duty Officer Enhancement:** Firefighters who serve as Duty Officers will receive an enhancement of \$20 for each night they serve in that function. Duty officers triage calls for service and can often resolve them without a full department response.

The Town Council appropriated up to \$65,000 to fund the enhanced firefighter stipend program.

“I am confident this action by Mayor Champagne and the Town Council will allow us to retain good firefighters, reward our most active responders and recruit new firefighters,” Fire Chief Stephen Eppler said.

The stipend program will continue to recognize the work of fire department members who ensure first responders are prepared to handle emergency calls, Fire Marshal and Fire Administrator Dan Wasilewski said.

“The volunteers who do other critically important work, such as maintaining our equipment and keeping track of supplies, will continue to be recognized through the existing quarterly stipend program,” he said.

There is a cost associated with the enhanced stipends, but it is small when compared to the benefit our volunteers provide to Vernon, Town Administrator and Emergency and Risk Management Director Michael Purcaro said.

“Public safety is our number one priority,” Purcaro said. “This enhancement to the quarterly stipend program will have a direct and positive impact on public safety.”

### **About the Town of Vernon**

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of more than 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870-3670 or visit [www.vernon-ct.gov](http://www.vernon-ct.gov).

###