

TOWN OF VERNON

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Vernon Town Council Approves 4-year Union Contract with Vernon Police Association

VERNON, Connecticut – The Vernon Town Council on Tuesday unanimously approved a four-year contract with the Vernon Police Association, the union that represents Vernon police officers.

The contract covers the period July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2026 and gives employees a 3 percent wage increase in each year. Also, \$3,000 will be added to the top step of the pay scale effective October 11, 2023. Additionally, and as part of the Town's recruitment and retention strategy, starting August 1, 2024 the bottom two steps of the pay scale will be eliminated. This will result in a significant increase in starting pay for new officers and enable them to reach the top step of the pay scale in two years. Any new officers hired from this point on will have their pay adjusted accordingly.

The union has ratified the agreement.

"I am pleased the union and town administration were able to come together and reach an agreement that serves the best interests of our community," Mayor Dan Champagne said.

Under the terms of the contract, a police officer hired today with a high school diploma would have a starting salary of \$68,036. On July 1, 2024, that starting pay increases to \$70,077, and a month later on August 1, 2024 increases again to \$82,935. The officer is also eligible for a step increase on their one-year anniversary bringing their pay to \$89,764. Additional compensation is available through the contract's education incentive program. For example, the salary for an officer with a Bachelors degree in Criminal Justice equates to \$93,311 on their one-year anniversary. The contract also includes tuition reimbursement.

"Our main goal from the beginning was to improve recruitment and retention, as reflected in our initial proposal and what we were able to achieve with this agreement," Assistant Town Administrator and Chief Negotiator Dawn Maselek said. "With this contract, we can increase starting pay for police officers and continue to offer a competitive benefit package."

Vernon police officers also receive a defined benefit pension plan that after 25 years entitles them to a monthly payment based on their top three base salary years. New employees in other town departments do not have defined benefit pensions.

The total cost of the new four-year contract over the current contract is approximately \$968,800.

“This contract acknowledges the outstanding work and contributions made by our officers while also meeting our fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers,” Town Administrator Michael Purcaro said.

Initially, town administration and the police union were not able to reach an agreement. The contract went to arbitration, and the town appealed the arbitrators’ decision. The parties resumed negotiations as the appeal was pending in Superior Court.

Prior to this contract agreement, town administration had reached contract settlements with five municipal employee unions without the need for attorneys or prolonged negotiations. Those contracts were with water pollution control supervisors, police department civilian employees, directors of town departments, the town professional’s employee union and the union representing public works, water pollution control, parks and recreation and animal control department employees.

“This contract keeps us competitive with other police departments and should greatly aid in our ongoing recruitment and retention efforts,” Police Chief John Kelley said. “The Vernon Police Department is a great place to work and offers employees opportunities for advancement and a variety of specialty units in which to serve our community.”

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.

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