

Draft Minutes
VERNON TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TOWN HALL – 14 PARK PLACE – 3RD FLOOR
VERNON, CONNECTICUT
TUESDAY, December 5, 2023
7:30 P.M.

RECEIVED
VERNON TOWN CLERK
23 DEC 12 PM 1:23

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

A.) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Recited

B.) ROLL CALL:

- Present: Council Members Laurie Abernathy, Laura Bush, Julie Clay, Bill Dauphin, Maryann Levesque, Brian Motola, Terilynn Rogers, Jesse Schoolnik, Andrew Tedford, Jim Tedford, Michael Wendus, Phyllis Winkler
- Absent: None
- Entered During Meeting: None
- Also Present: Mayor Daniel A. Champagne, Town Administrator Michael Purcaro, Recording Secretary Meriline Sarkar

C.) CITIZEN CITATIONS AND AWARDS:

VOLUNTEER WALL HONOREES

Carole Guttman

Irma Carter: To be awarded at a later date.

Mayor Daniel A. Champagne expressed gratitude to the volunteers for their generous service to the Town of Vernon. He presented the proclamation and a pin to Carole Guttman. Carole Gutman's husband and family were in attendance. She thanked the Town for this distinction.

Recess at 7:37 PM and reconvened 7:45 PM

D.) CITIZENS FORUM:

- Genaro Gonzalez, 133 West Main Street, Vernon, congratulated the new Town Council members. He spoke on international and national politics, immigration and other topics.
- Betsy Soto, Director of the Vernon Housing Authority, thanked the Town Council, Mayor Daniel A. Champagne, Town Administrator Michael Purcaro, Nicole Greco, all Town Hall staff and all other department staff who work closely with the Town Housing Authority. She presented a check in the amount of \$100,083 in lieu of taxes as the Annual Pilot payment to Mayor Daniel A. Champagne.
- Council Member Clay left at 7:54PM and joined the meeting at 7:55PM
- Polly Schaefer, Fox Hill Drive, congratulated the new Council Members. She invited all to attend the event "Wreaths Across America" on December 16, 12pm, at Lugg Field, Grove Hill Cemetery, Rockville. They'll lay wreaths on the graves of every branch of the military. Rockville High School students will play taps to honor the veterans. Rain or shine, the event will take place on December 16, at 12pm, simultaneously all across America.

Citizen's Forum ended at 7:55 PM

F.) PUBLIC HEARING: None

G.) PRESENTATIONS BY THE ADMINISTRATION

Mayor Daniel A. Champagne updated the Town Council on various topics.

1. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne reminded that the Winterfest has been rescheduled for Thursday, December 7, 2023 beginning at 6pm. Santa Claus will have his regularly scheduled hours from 4-7pm, and there will be cookies, cider and candy canes for all. He invites everyone to come and have fun.
2. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne congratulated the Rockville High School Football team for winning their semi-final game against Holy Cross last weekend and have reached the class M finals. The championship game is scheduled for Saturday, December 9th at 1:45 pm at Central Connecticut State University. Tickets are available on the CIAC website.
3. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne reports that the Arctic Splash was held last Saturday, December 2, 2023 with one of the largest turn outs yet. Over 70 splashers participated. The Maple Street School defended their most school spirit award for the 4th year. The RHS Art Program students designed the t-shirts for this year's event. Over \$4000 was received. Contributions went to the Cornerstone and Send a Kid to Camp program. Mayor thanked all those who registered, participated, donated and support this event.
4. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne asked everyone to please mark the calendars also for the Wreaths Across America Ceremony on December 16, 2023 beginning promptly at 12:00 noon at Lugg field, Grove Hill Cemetery. This is a very moving tribute to our veterans. All are invited.
5. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne congratulates Dr. Joseph Macary for being named 2024 Connecticut's Superintendent of the year, by the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents. Dr. Macary is committed to creating an environment where Vernon children excel in school so that they are prepared to lead rewarding and successful lives.
6. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne thanked Betsy Soto, Director of the Vernon Housing Authority, for presenting the Authority's Annual Pilot Check.
7. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne reports that the work on the Horowitz Pool is underway.
8. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne informs everyone that a long time member of the Vernon fire department passed this week, Alfred "Smokey" Dreher. "Smokey" joined the Vernon Fire Department on August 14, 1950 and has remained with the Fire Service for over 73 years. He will be missed by everyone who knew and served with him. Services are still being planned. Mayor asked everyone join him in a moment of silence for Smokey.

H.) ACTION ON CONSENT AGENDA

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made a motion to move the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

- C 1.** Request the Town Council approve the tax refunds for prior and current year taxes as outlined in the memorandum from Terry Hjarne, Collector of Revenue. (See memorandum dated November 22, 2023 to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator from Terry Hjarne, Collector of Revenue relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THREE (3) TAX REFUNDS FOR PRIOR YEARS TOTALING \$712.73 AND FIFTEEN (15) REFUNDS FOR CURRENT YEAR TOTALING \$4,514.86 AS OUTLINED IN THE MEMORANDUM FROM TERRY HJARNE, COLLECTOR OF REVENUE TO MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR DATED NOVEMBER 22, 2023.

- C 2.** Request the Town Council approve the reappointment of Mayor Daniel A. Champagne as an ex-officio member of the Energy Improvement District Board, said term to commence November 13, 2023 and expires on November 10, 2025. (Mayor Champagne's reappointment runs with his term as Mayor.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO THE TOWN OF VERNON ORDINANCE # 292 AND TOWN CODE SECTION 3(A), THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE REAPPOINTMENT OF MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S AS AN EX-OFFICIO MEMBER OF THE ENERGY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD, SAID TERM TO COMMENCE ON NOVEMBER 13, 2023 AND EXPIRES ON NOVEMBER 10, 2025.

- C 3.** Request the Town Council approve the reappointment of William Meier, 30 Park Street, Vernon, Connecticut as a regular member of the Board of Directors, North Central District Health Department, said term to commence on January 1, 2024 and expires on December 31, 2026. (Mr. Meier is a town employee and therefore no resume is included.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO C.G.S. §19a-241; CHARTER CHAPTER XI, SECTIONS 1,5, & 14, THE TOWN COUNCIL APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S REAPPOINTMENT OF WILLIAM MEIER, 30 PARK STREET, VERNON, CONNECTICUT A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT. SAID TERM TO COMMENCE ON JANUARY 1, 2024 AND EXPIRES ON DECEMBER 31, 2026.

- C 4.** Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of Cara Clay, (R), 631 Talcottville Road, Vernon, Connecticut as a regular member of the Fair Rent Commission said term to commence on December 6, 2023 and expires June 30, 2025. (A copy of Ms. Clay's resume is included for Council review.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO ORDINANCE NO. 321 "ESTABLISHMENT OF A FAIR RENT COMMISSION", THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF CARA CLAY, (R), 631 TALCOTTVILLE ROAD, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AS A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE FAIR RENT COMMISSION SAID TERM TO COMMENCE ON DECEMBER 6, 2023 AND EXPIRES JUNE 30, 2025.

- C 5.** Request the Town Council approve the reappointment of Robin Lockwood, (U), 121 Huntington Drive, Vernon, CT as a regular member of the Planning and Zoning Commission, said term to commence on January 1, 2024 and expires on December 31, 2026. (A copy of Ms. Lockwood's resume is included for Council review.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO CHARTER CHAPTER VIII, SEC. 1,6 & 11 DATED JANUARY 1, 1985; C.G.S. §8-4A&B, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S REAPPOINTMENT OF ROBIN LOCKWOOD, (U), 121 HUNTINGTON DRIVE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AS A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION FOR A TERM TO COMMENCE ON JANUARY 1, 2024 AND EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2026.

- C 6.** Request the Town Council approve the reappointment of Stephen H. Ransom, Jr, (R), 23 Olive Lane, Vernon, Connecticut as a regular member of the Planning and Zoning Commission, said term to commence December 6, 2023 and expires December 31, 2024. (A copy of Mr. Ransom's resume is included for Council review. It should be noted that Mr. Ransom is completing the unexpired term of Iris Mullan.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO CHARTER CHAPTER VIII, SEC. 1,6 & 11 DATED JANUARY 1, 1985; C.G.S. §8-4A&B, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S REAPPOINTMENT OF STEPHEN H. RANSOM, JR., 23 OLIVE LANE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AS A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION FOR A TERM TO COMMENCE ON DECEMBER 6, 2023 AND EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2026.

- C 7.** Request the Town Council approve the appointment of Timothy DiRocco, (R), 33 Grant Street, Vernon, Connecticut as a regular member of the Conservation Commission, said term to commence on December 6, 2023 and expires June 30, 2026. (A copy of Mr. DiRocco's resume is included for Council review.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO TOWN OF VERNON ORDINANCE # 189 – TOWN CODE SECTION 10-91 & 10-92, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF TIMOTHY DIROCCO, (R), 33 GRANT STREET, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AS A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION, SAID TERM TO BEGIN DECEMBER 6, 2023 AND EXPIRES ON JUNE 30, 2026.

I.) DISCUSSION OF PULLED CONSENT ITEMS: None

J.) PENDING BUSINESS: None

K.) NEW BUSINESS

1. Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne appointment of Youth Poet Laureate, Natalie Crowley, Rockville High School Senior, for a term to commence December 6, 2023 and expires November 30, 2024. (No resume is included at this time)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO THE TOWN COUNCIL RESOLUTION DATED APRIL 16, 2019, THE TOWN COUNCIL APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF NATALIE CROWLEY, YOUTH POET LAUREATE, A SENIOR AT ROCKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL FOR A TERM COMMENCING NOVEMBER 6, 2023 AND EXPIRES NOVEMBER 20, 2024, AND FURTHER CONGRATULATES NATALIE CROWLEY ON HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of Natalie Crowley, Youth Poet Laureate, a Senior at Rockville High School for a term commencing November 6, 2023 and expires November 20, 2024.

Natalie Crowley recited one of her poems to the Town Council and answered questions from the Council Members.

Jennifer Johnston-Marius, Rockville Public Library Director, spoke and answered questions regarding the selection process of the Youth Poet Laureate program.

The motion carried unanimously.

2. **Request the Town Council approve the assets disposal for the Vernon Police Department, Vernon Fire Department and the Rockville Public Library.** (See memorandum from Jeffrey A. O'Neill, Finance Officer and Treasurer dated November 29, 2023 to Mayor Daniel A. Champagne and Town Administration Michael J. Purcaro relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE DISPOSAL OF ASSETS FOR THE VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT, VERNON FIRE DEPARTMENT AND ROCKVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY AS DISCLOSED ON THE REQUEST FOR DISPOSAL OF FIXED ASSETS FORMS.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion to approve the disposal of assets for the Vernon Police Department, Vernon Fire Department and Rockville Public Library as disclosed on the request for disposal of fixed assets forms.

Mayor Daniel A. Champagne spoke and answered questions. The motion carried unanimously.

3. **Request the Town Council approve the grant application by the Youth Service Bureau to receive funding for the 2024 Summer Youth Employment & Learning Program offered through the Capital Workforce Partners.** (See memorandum from Michelle Hill, Director of the Vernon Youth Service Bureau dated November 27, 2023 to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

RESOLVED, THE VERNON TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE GRANT APPLICATION BY THE VERNON YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE 2024 SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT & LEARNING PROGRAM AND FURTHER AUTHORIZES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE OR HIS DESIGNEE TO SIGN ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS FOR SAME.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion to approve the grant application by the Vernon Youth Service Bureau for funding through the 2024 Summer Youth Employment & Learning Program and further authorizes Mayor Daniel A. Champagne or his designee to sign any and all documents for same.

Michelle Hill, Director of Vernon Youth Services Bureau, explained the nature of work and services done by the Youth Services Bureau and answered questions from the Council Members.

The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request the Town Council amend the resolution passed at the August 15, 2023 Town Council meeting to support the Housing Authority application to fund their rehabilitation project at Grove Court and Grove Court Extension. The amount originally authorized for Small Cities funding was \$2,000,000. The new amount authorized for this project is \$3,300,000. (See the letter dated November 9, 2023 to Mayor Daniel A. Champagne from the State of Connecticut Department of Housing requesting the amendment.)

AMENDED RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED, THE VERNON TOWN COUNCIL AUTHORIZES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE OR HIS DESIGNEE TO FILE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO RECEIVE THE \$3,300,000.00 FROM THE SMALL CITIES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING FOR THE GROVE COURT AND GROVE COURT EXTENSION RENOVATIONS AND FURTHER AUTHORIZES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE OR HIS DESIGNEE TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne or his designee to file any and all documents required to receive the \$3,300,000.00 from the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program through the Department of Housing for the Grove Court and Grove Court extension renovations and further authorizes Mayor Daniel A. Champagne or his designee to execute any and all documents on behalf of the town.

Mayor Daniel A. Champagne explained the grant received.

Betsy Soto, Director of the Vernon Housing Authority, spoke to explain the process of the grant received and answered questions. Discussion ensued.

The motion carried unanimously.

- L.) INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES: None
- M.) ACTION ON ORDINANCE (S) PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED: None
- N.) IDENTIFICATION/ADOPTION OF ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS: None
- O.) DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL ITEMS AND INFORMATIONAL ITEMS: None
- P.) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

THE TOWN COUNCIL WAIVES THE READING OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING OF **NOVEMBER 21, 2023** AND MOVES TO APPROVE SAID MINUTES.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made a motion to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the Regular Town Council meeting on *November 21, 2023*. The motion carried unanimously.

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

1. Monthly Report for the Town Clerk's Office – October, 2023 as submitted by Karen C. Daigle, Town Clerk.
2. Adopted 2023-2025 Vernon Town Council Rules of Procedure.

E.) EXECUTIVE SESSION

8:26 PM Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made the following motion to go into Executive Session #1. The motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION #1

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 CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS AND INVITES MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR TO ATTEND.

8:44 PM Executive Session #1 ended.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made the following motion to go into Executive Session #2. The motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION #2

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 STRATEGY AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH RESPECT TO PENDING CLAIMS OR PENDING LITIGATIONS AND INVITES MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR TO ATTEND.

8:56 PM Executive Session #2 ended.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made the following motion to go into Executive Session #3. The motion carried unanimously.

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 CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS AND INVITES MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR TO ATTEND.

9:16 PM Executive Session #3 ended.

EXECUTIVE SESSION #1

NO PROPOSED MOTION

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made the following motion to Executive Session #2.

EXECUTIVE SESSION #2

IN THE INTEREST OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AWARDS THE CONTRACT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES FOR REMEDIATION SERVICES AT 162 WARREN AVENUE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AND FURTHER AUTHORIZES EXPENDITURES RELATED TO THE SAME, NOT TO EXCEED \$48,000.00, SUCH AUTHORIZED EXPENDITURE IS A REIMBURSEABLE EXPENSE.

The motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION #3

NO PROPOSED MOTION

R.) ADJOURNMENT (9:17 PM)

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made motion to adjourn at 9:17 PM.
The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Meriline Sarkar
Recording Secretary