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MINUTES
VERNON TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
TOWN HALL – 14 PARK PLACE – 3RD FLOOR
TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024 – 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 Laurie Abernathy, Laura Bush, Julie Clay, Bill Dauphin, Maryann Levesque, Brian Motola, Terilynn Rogers, Jesse Schoolnik, Andrew Tedford, Jim Tedford, Michael Wendus and Phyllis Winkler

Absent:

Entered During Meeting:

Also Present: Town Administrator Michael Purcaro, Recording Secretary Karen Daigle

C.) CITIZEN CITATIONS AND AWARDS

None

D.) CITIZEN'S FORUM

Genaro Gonzalez, 133 West Main Street, spoke about the media, immigration and the world situation.

7:36 PM Citizen's Forum ended.

F.) PUBLIC HEARING

None

G.) PRESENTATIONS BY THE ADMINISTRATION

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

- There will be a reception for Jeff O'Neill, our Finance Director, who is leaving the Town of Vernon. Details are forthcoming.
- The Finance Department has been recognized for the 32nd straight year for Excellence in Finance Reporting. Thank you to the financial teams from the Town and Vernon Public Schools, as the high standards set by the GFOA is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve.
- Attorney Lou Spadaccini would provide information training to the Council at this meeting.
- The IT Department is available for assistance in accessing emails and Council members may contact the Help Desk directly.
- For Council members, please contact Administration with questions or issues that arise between meetings and either Mayor Champagne or Town Administrator Purcaro will provide answers. Agenda items must be submitted as attachments, not in the body an email.
- Residents and Council members are encouraged to sign up for ALERT VERNON, the Community Notification System, for information about Vernon events and incidents. Sign up at Vernon-ct.gov and click on ALERT VERNON.
- Anyone interested in planning or participating in America's 250th year anniversary on July 4, 2026 may contact Administration.
- Thank you to Julie Clay for her many years on the Council.

Council Member Clay addressed the Council with thanks and appreciation to have served the residents of Vernon

Town Attorney, Lou Spadaccini, presented the Council with a training session regarding the Town of Vernon Charter and Freedom of Information practices. Mayor and Council members asked questions. Discussion ensued.

8:21 PM Council Member Wendus left the meeting; returned at 8:24 PM.

H.) ACTION ON CONSENT AGENDA

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Jim Tedford, made a motion to move the Consent Agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

- C 1.** Request the Town approve the tax refunds for prior and current year taxes as outlined in the memorandum from Terry Hjarne, Collector of Revenue. (See memorandum dated January 4, 2024 to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator from Terry Hjarne, Collector of Revenue relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES TWO (2) TAX REFUNDS FOR PRIOR YEARS TOTALING \$336.23 AND TEN (10) REFUNDS FOR CURRENT YEAR TOTALING \$3088.34 AS OUTLINED IN THE MEMORANDUM FROM TERRY HJARNE, COLLECTOR OF REVENUE TO MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR DATED JANUARY 4, 2024.

- C 2.** Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of Bill Campbell, (R), 214 Tracy Drive, Vernon, Connecticut as a regular member of the Human Services Advisory Board, said term to commence on January 17, 2024 and expires June 30, 2025. (See Mr. Campbell's resume for Council review. Mr. Campbell is converting from a Council Member appointment to a citizen appointment.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO CHARTER CHAPTER XV, SEC. 3, 05-02-1989 TOWN RESOLUTION VOL. 24, PAGE 382 AS AMENDED /VOL. 37 PAGE 266 AND TOWN COUNCIL RESOLUTION DATED 02-19-2002, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF BILL CAMPBELL, (R), 214 TRACY DRIVE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT, AS A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION FOR A TERM BEGINNING JANUARY 17, 2024 AND EXPIRES ON JUNE 30, 2025.

- C 3.** Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of Bill Campbell, (R), 214 Tracy Drive, Vernon, Connecticut as a regular member to the Water Pollution Control Authority, said term to commence on January 17, 2024 and expires on December 31, 2026. (See Mr. Campbell's resume for Council review.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO CHARTER CHAPTER VIII, SEC. 3; AND CHARTER CHAPTER XII, SEC. 4, THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF BILL CAMPBELL, (R), 214 TRACY DRIVE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT, AS A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE WATER

POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY, SAID APPOINTMENT TO COMMENCE ON JANUARY 17, 2024 AND EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2026.

- C 4.** Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne’s reappointment of Jeffrey A. O’Neill, Finance Officer and Treasurer, 14 Park Place, Vernon, Connecticut commencing on January 17, 2024 and ending February 1, 2024. (Mr. O’Neill is currently an employee of the Town of Vernon and therefore no resume is attached.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL, CONSISTENT WITH CHAPTER IX, SECTION TWO OF THE TOWN CHARTER, ENTITLED "OFFICERS AND BOARDS APPOINTED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL, HEREBY APPROVES THE REAPPOINTMENT OF JEFFREY A. O’NEILL, FINANCE OFFICIER AND TREASURER, 14 PARK PLACE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AS TOWN TREASURER, SAID TERM TO BEGIN ON JANUARY 17, 2024 AND EXPIRES ON FEBRUARY 1, 2024.

- C 5.** Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne’s appointment of Leslie Campolongo, 55 W. Main Street, Vernon, Connecticut as a regular member of the Capital Region Council of Governments Regional Planning Board, said term to commence January 17, 2024 and expires on December 31, 2025. (Ms. Campolongo is an employee of the Planning Department therefore no resume is included in the packet.)

PROPOSED MOTION

PURSUANT TO THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION BY-LAWS, THE VERNON TOWN COUNCIL APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE’S APPOINTMENT OF LESLIE CAMPOLONGO, 55 W. MAIN STREET, VERNON, CONNECTICUT TO THE CRCOG REGIONAL PLANNING BOARD, SAID TERM TO COMMENCE ON JANUARY 17, 2024 AND EXPIRES ON DECEMBER 31, 2025.

- I.) DISCUSSION OF PULLED CONSENT ITEMS**
None
- J.) PENDING BUSINESS**
None
- K.) NEW BUSINESS**

- 1.** Request the Town Council approve the generous donation from American Eagle Financial Credit Union to Address Local Food Insecurity. (See memorandum dated January 2, 2024 from Matt Hellman, Director of Social Services relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTS THE DONATION FROM AMERICAN EAGLE FINANCIAL CREDIT UNION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$500.00 TO ADDRESS LOCAL FOOD INSECURITY.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion to accept the donation from American Eagle Financial Credit Union in the amount of \$500.00 to address local food insecurity. Motion carried unanimously.

- 2. Request the Town Council hereby approve the Vernon Republican Town Committee's endorsement of _____ as a Town Council member to complete the term of Julie Clay. (This candidate will fill the vacated seat of Julie Clay effective January 18, 2024. The candidate information will be provided as soon as it arrives.)

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE VERNON REPUBLICAN TOWN COMMITTEE'S NOMINATION OF JOHN O'CONNELL AS A TOWN COUNCIL MEMBER FOR A TERM EFFECTIVE JANUARY 18, 2024 AND EXPIRING ON NOVEMBER 10, 2025.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion to approve the Vernon Republican Town Committee's nomination of John O'Connell as a Town Council member for a term effective January 18, 2024 and expiring on November 10, 2025. Motion carried unanimously.

- 3. Request the Town Council approve the Fire Department's application for the Firefighter Support Grant through the Connecticut Water Company. (See memorandum dated January 2, 2024 from Stephen Eppler, Fire Chief to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

RESOLVE THE VERNON TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE GRANT APPLICATION BY THE VERNON FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE FIREFIGHTER SUPPORT GRANT 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 Levesque, proposed a resolution to approve the application for funding through the Firefighter Support Grant Program and authorizes Mayor Daniel A. Champagne or his designee to sign any and all documents. Fire Chief Steve Eppler and Fire Marshal Dan Wasilewski, spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously.

- 4. Request the Town Council approve the Fire Department's application for the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection – Commission on Fire Prevention and Control grant program. (See memorandum dated December 28, 2023 from Stephen Eppler, Fire Chief to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

PROPOSED MOTION

RESOLVE THE VERNON TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE GRANT APPLICATION BY THE VERNON FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION – COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL GRANT 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, proposed a resolution to approve the application for funding through the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection – Commission of Fire Prevention and Control Grant Program and authorizes Mayor Daniel A. Champagne or his designee to sign any and all documents. Fire Chief Steve Eppler and Fire

Marshal Dan Wasilewski, spoke and answered questions. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously.

- 5. Request the Town Council rescind the resolution of October 23, 1999 establishing the "Conservation Open Space Task Force", whose purpose was to identify, prioritize and recommend the acquisition of open space to the Conservation Commission. This group has fulfilled its duties and is no longer required. (See the October 23, 1999 resolution for review.)**

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY RESCINDS THE RESOLUTION OF OCTOBER 23, 1999 ESTABLISHING THE CONSERVATION OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE AND RETURNS SAID DUTIES TO THE TOWN OF VERNON CONSERVATION COMMISSION.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made a motion to rescind the resolution of October 23, 1999 establishing the Conservation Open Space Task Force and returns said duties to the Town of Vernon Conservation Commission. Mayor Champagne spoke on the subject. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously.

- 6. Request the Town Council approve the Vernon Parks and Recreation grant application for funding through the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. (See memorandum from Marty Sitler, Director of Parks and Recreation to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator dated January 8, 2024 relative to same.)**

PROPOSED MOTION

RESOLVE THE VERNON TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE GRANT APPLICATION BY THE VERNON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION GRANT 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 Levesque, proposed a resolution to approve the application by the Vernon Parks and Recreation Department for funding through the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection grant program and authorizes Mayor Daniel A. Champagne or his designee to sign any and all documents. Mayor Champagne spoke on the subject. Motion carried unanimously.

- 7. Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of the Town of Vernon Deputy Assessor. (See memorandum from Mayor Daniel A. Champagne to the Vernon Town Council dated January 10, 2024 relative to same.)**

PROPOSED MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL PURSUANT TO CHAPTER X, SEC. 3 AND CHAPTER XI, SEC. 1 AND 4 OF THE VERNON TOWN CHARTER, APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF JAMISON BOUCHER AS DEPUTY ASSESSOR FOR THE TOWN OF VERNON.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to approve Mayor Champagne's appointment of Jamison Boucher as Deputy Assessor for the Town of Vernon. Mr. Boucher spoke and answered questions. Town Administrator, Michael Purcaro, spoke regarding Mr. Boucher's appointment. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously.

- 8. Request from Town Council Member Terilynn Rogers relative to an update on the Restoration, Access and Community Engagement Grant. (See email from Council Member Rogers relative to same.)

NO ACTION REQUIRED

Mayor Champagne spoke on the subject. Discussion ensued. No action taken.

- 9. Request from Town Council Member Phyllis Winkler relative to an update on the process for Board and Commission Appointments. (See email from Council Member Phyllis Winkler relative to same.)

NO ACTION REQUIRED

Mayor Champagne spoke on the subject, along with the Mayor's Executive Assistant, Diane Wheelock and Attorney Spadaccini. Discussion ensued. No action taken.

9:28 PM Council Member Rogers left the meeting; returned at 9:30 PM

- L.) **INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES**
None
- M.) **ACTION ON ORDINANCES 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 **DECEMBER 19, 2023** AND THAT MINUTES OF SAID MEETING BE APPROVED.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made a motion to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the December 19, 2023 regular Town Council meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

THE TOWN COUNCIL WAIVES THE READING OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING ON **MAY 16, 2023** AND THAT MINUTES OF SAID MEETING BE APPROVED. *(THESE MINUTES WERE NEVER MOVED FROM DRAFT TO APPROVED.)*

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the May 16, 2023 regular Town Council meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

- E.) **EXECUTIVE SESSION** (Taken Out of Order)

9:33 PM Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Jim Tedford, made the following motion to go into Executive Session #1. 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.

9:45 PM Executive Session #1 ended.

9:45 PM Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made the following motion to go into Executive Session #2. Motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION #2

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.

9:52 PM Executive Session #2 ended.

9:52 PM Council Member Levesque, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made a motion to extend curfew to the end of business. Motion carried unanimously.

9:52 PM Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Abernathy, made the following motion to go into Executive Session #3. 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.

10:06 PM Executive Session #3 ended.

Council Member Clay, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made the following motion to Executive Session #1:

MOTION

CONSISTENT WITH THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE MAYOR AND TOWN ADMINISTRATORS, THE TOWN COUNCIL APPROVES A ONE-TIME MARKET ADJUSTMENT FOR THE POSITIONS OF ROAD FOREMAN AND LEAD ROAD FOREMAN.

Motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Clay, seconded by Council Member Andrew Tedford, made the following motion to Executive Session #2:

MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY ACCEPTS THE ROAD KNOWN AS ROCKLEDGE DRIVE, AND FURTHER ACCEPTS THE PAYMENT OF \$186,115.79 FROM THE OWNER, VERNON VILLAGE INC., AS PAYMENT FOR RECLAIMING, PREPARING THE PROPER BASE AND TOP COAT TO INCLUDE TACK COAT, BLEND DRIVEWAYS, LIQUID BASE AND CURB TO BRING ROCKLEDGE UP TO THE TOWN ACCEPTED STANDARD.

Motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Clay, seconded by Council Member Bush, made the following motion to Executive Session #3:

MOTION

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AUTHORIZES THE PURCHASE OF NEW HANDGUNS FOR THE VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT FROM WITMER PUBLIC SAFETY GROUP IN THE AMOUNT OF \$37,317.40, SAID FUNDS TO BE EXPENDED FROM THE FEDERAL ASSET FORFEITURE FUNDS.

Motion carried unanimously.

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

1. Monthly Report Town Clerk - December, 2023 as submitted by Town Clerk Karen C. Daigle.

R.) Adjourn (10:08 PM)

Council Member Clay, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made a motion to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

Received:

Approved:



Karen C. Daigle
Recording Secretary