

TOWN OF VERNON

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Vernon Town Council Unanimously Approves 3-year Contract with Public Works Supervisors

VERNON, Connecticut – The Town Council on Tuesday unanimously approved a three-year contract with the union that represents supervisors in the Department of Public Works.

For the second time, Town Administrator Michael Purcaro, Assistant Town Administrator Dawn Maselek, union President Jeff Schambach and union Vice President Eric Jensen negotiated a contract over lunch and without lawyers, saving the town and union a significant amount of money. The first contract negotiated with the supervisor's union in this manner was in 2021.

Communication is key to the success of the negotiation process, and a great deal of dialogue takes place between contract negotiations. Whether it be wages, contract language, or a novel idea, with regular communications throughout the term, everyone knows well ahead of any formal or informal meetings what the issues are, and what needs to be addressed.

"The union came to the table with reasonable and realistic proposals and an open and honest approach to negotiating," Purcaro said.

The union's five members include the three public works foremen, the fleet supervisor and the refuse supervisor. They are members of Local 818 of Council 4 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

"I am glad management and our employees have a strong working relationship, were able to engage in constructive and meaningful negotiations and reach an agreement that is good for the taxpayers and our employees," Mayor Dan Champagne said. "Every day these experienced leaders in our public works department provide guidance to a team that does some of the most visible work in our community – plowing snow, maintaining roads, collecting refuse and recycling and maintaining our fleet of vehicles."

The contract includes a market adjustment of \$5,000 in the first year, and 2.95 percent raises in the second and third years.

“The market adjustment keeps us competitive and aligns with our recruitment and retention strategy,” Purcaro said. “This contract acknowledges the outstanding work of these employees while also meeting our fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers.”

Also, the town will increase its match to the defined contribution retirement plan to 6 percent from 4 percent for employees who contribute at least 7.5 percent of their pay to the plan.

The goal of this enhanced employee benefit is to encourage and maximize savings for retirement, said Purcaro.

Purcaro described the negotiation process as “collaborative, efficient and collegial,” and Schambach and Jensen agreed.

“We were pleased to be able to work with the administration in a collaborative way to achieve mutual goals and retain the many years of combined knowledge and experience our members bring to the town,” Schambach said.

Because the town and union were able to avoid legal fees, the contract includes a one-time \$500 signing bonus to reflect those savings.

“It was a smooth process between our negotiation team, Dawn and Mike,” Jensen said. “This agreement will help us retain current employees and make us more attractive to new candidates.”

The agreement is the sixth that the administration was able to achieve with a local bargaining unit without the use of lawyers or the need for protracted negotiations, mediation or arbitration.

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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