

Draft Minutes  
VERNON TOWN COUNCIL  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
TOWN HALL – 14 PARK PLACE – 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR  
VERNON, CONNECTICUT  
**TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024**  
7:30 P.M.

RECEIVED  
VERNON TOWN CLERK  
24 MAR 12 PM 3:46

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 B. Bush, Bill Dauphin, Maryann Levesque, Brian R. Motola, John B. O’Connell, Terilynn Rogers, Jesse Schoolnik, Andrew J. Tedford, Jim Tedford, Michael D. 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:** None

D.) **CITIZENS FORUM:**

- Genaro Gonzalez, 133 West Main Street, Vernon, spoke on the harmful effects of radiation that emanates from electronic devices and other topics.
- Citizen’s Forum ended at 7:37 PM

F.) **PUBLIC HEARING:**

**PUBLIC HEARING TO RECEIVE COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS RELATIVE TO “AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED “ESTABLISHMENT OF FEES PAYABLE UNDER BUILDING, FIRE AND DEMOLITION CODE, FIRE MARSHALS AND FIRE HAZARDS, SAFETY OR PUBLIC AND FIRE MARSHAL INSPECTIONS” (A COPY OF SAID ORDINANCE IS INCLUDED FOR COUNCIL REVIEW.)**

MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE TO CALL THE PUBLIC HEARING TO ORDER.

TOWN CLERK TO READ THE LEGAL NOTICE.

MAYOR AND TOWN TO RECEIVE COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS.

PUBLIC HEARING IS ADJOURNED.

**Note: Action to be considered in “Section M” Action on Ordinance(s) Previously Presented.**

- 7:37 PM, Mayor Daniel A. Champagne called the Public Hearing to order.

- Karen Daigle, Town Clerk, read the legal notice advertised outside the Town Hall bulletin board and on the Town website on February 21, 2024 and published in Journal Enquirer on February 23, 2024.
- Dan Wasilewski, Fire Marshall, presented the details of the proposed ordinance and answered questions from the public and the Town Council.
- Mayor Daniel A. Champagne opened the floor to receive comments and questions.
- Genaro Gonzalez, 133 West Main Street, Vernon, asked who are being charged these new fees.
- Dan Wasilewski, Fire Marshall, answered that the fees are mostly for the new constructions and the alteration of the building three family or above.
- 7:42 PM, the Public Hearing was adjourned.

#### G.) PRESENTATIONS BY THE ADMINISTRATION

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

1. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne points out that on the agenda of this evening are the dates for all the **Budget Meetings** for the 2024-2025 budget. This Friday the books will be available for pick up between the hours of 10 – 4PM.
2. Mayor Daniel A. Champagne attended two **Eagle Scout Ceremonies in February**. Two brothers Ian and Jonathan Nevelos both completed all the requirements and initiated repair and upgrades to the Rails to Trails. One of the projects was on the spur from West Street to Rockville High School and the other was the entrance to the Tunnel Road stretch to Valley Falls. Congratulations to Ian and Jonathan on a job well done.
3. The **Horowitz Pool Project** with Juliano’s Pools has received approval from the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health to move forward with the plans for the pool. Construction continues onsite by Juliano’s Pools and the Department of Public Works Teams. More to come as things progress.
4. The **Fire Department had their Annual Awards Ceremony** last night at Rockville High School. The following awards were given out:

<b>Officer of the Year:</b>	Peter Orłowski
<b>Firefighter of the Year:</b>	Stan Landry
<b>Junior Fighter of the Year:</b>	David Cone
<b>EMT of the Year:</b>	Octavio “Tabby” Muniz

Congratulations to the honorees and thank you to all the Volunteer Firefighters who work to keep our town safe every day.

5. **Dates to Remember:**

**Egg Hunt**, 5:30 – 6:30 pm Henry Park, March 28, 2024

**Annual Town Meeting**, April 23, 2024 7pm Rockville High School.

*Mother's Day Dash*, 9:00 am start, May 12, 2024, Henry Park

**H.) ACTION ON CONSENT AGENDA**

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Jim Tedford, 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 February 22, 2024 to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator from Terry Hjarne, Collector of Revenue relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES ONE (1) REFUND FOR PRIOR FISCAL YEARS TOTALING \$1,957.72 AND SEVEN (7) REFUNDS FOR CURRENT YEAR TOTALING \$4,144.35 AS OUTLINED IN THE MEMORANDUM FROM TERRY HJARNE, COLLECTOR OF REVENUE TO MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR DATED FEBRUARY 22, 2024.

- C 2. Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's reappointment of Tara Trapp, (R), 52 East Street, Vernon, Connecticut as an alternate member of the Historic Properties Commission, said term to commence on April 5, 2024 and expires on April 4, 2029.** (See Ms. Trapp's resume included for Council review.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

PURSUANT TO ORDINANCE NO. 185 (TOWN CODE SEC. 2-122) THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S REAPPOINTMENT OF TARA TRAPP, (R), 52 EAST STREET, VERNON, CONNECTICUT AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER OF THE HISTORIC PROPERTIES COMMISSION FOR A TERM TO COMMENCE ON APRIL 5, 2024 AND EXPIRES APRIL 4, 2029.

- C 3. Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of Maureen Gabriele, Senior Center Director as Town of Vernon Assistant Municipal Agent for the Elderly, said term to commence on March 6, 2024 and expires August 17, 2026.** (Ms. Gabriele is a Town of Vernon employee therefore no resume is included.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF MAUREEN GABRIELE, SENIOR CENTER DIRECTOR AS THE TOWN OF VERNON'S ASSISTANT MUNICIPAL AGENT FOR THE ELDERLY, SAID TERM TO COMMENCE ON MARCH 6, 2024 AND EXPIRES AUGUST 17, 2026.

- C 4. Request the Town Council approve Mayor Daniel A. Champagne's appointment of Matthew Hellman, Director of Social Services as Town of Vernon Municipal Agent for the Elderly, said term to commence on March 6, 2024 and expires June 30, 2026.** (Mr. Hellman is a Town of Vernon employee therefore no resume is included.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE'S APPOINTMENT OF MATTHEW HELLMAN, DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES -AS TOWN OF VERNON MUNICIPAL AGENT FOR THE ELDERLY FOR A TERM TO COMMENCE ON MARCH 6, 2024 AND EXPIRES JUNE 30, 2026.

I.) **DISCUSSION OF PULLED CONSENT ITEMS:** None

J.) **PENDING BUSINESS:** None

K.) **NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Request the Town Council approve the request from the Vernon Community Arts Center (VCAC) Executive Director Liz Bologna.** (See letter dated January 26, 2024 to Mayor Daniel A. Champagne from VCAC Executive Director Liz Bologna relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION #1**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AUTHORIZES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE OR HIS DESIGNEE TO SIGN ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS RELATIVE TO THE ONE YEAR LEASE MODIFICATION WITH THE VERNON COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made a motion to authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne or his designee to sign any and all documents relative to the one year lease modification with the Vernon Community Arts Center.
- Mayor invited the VCAC Executive Director to present.
- Liz Bologna, VCAC Executive Director, presented the nature of the programs they run in the Vernon Arts Center and answered questions from the Council Members.
- Council Member Winkler declared conflict and didn't vote.
- The motion passed.

**PROPOSED MOTION #2**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AUTHORIZES THE PAYMENT OF FIFTY PERCENT (50%) OF THE UTILITY COSTS FOR THE PROPERTY KNOWN AS 709 HARTFORD TURNPIKE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT, SAID FIFTY PERCENT (50%) UTILITY COSTS WILL BE PAID DIRECTLY TO THE UTILITY COMPANY AS REQUIRED THROUGH THE PUBLIC WORKS BUDGET. THE REMAINING FIFTY PERCENT (50%) WILL BE PAID BY THE TENANT, VERNON COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER PER SAID LEASE DATED APRIL 25, 2016.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Jim Tedford, made a motion to authorize the Town of Vernon and the Vernon Community Arts Center to each pay 50% of utility costs for the property at 709 Hartford Turnpike.
- Liz Bologna, VCAC Executive Director, answered questions from the Council Members. Discussion ensued.
- Council Member Winkler declared conflict and didn't vote.
- The motion passed.

2. **Request the Town Council approve the 2024-2025 Budget Meeting dates.** (See memorandum dated February 26, 2024 from Diane Wheelock, Executive Assistant to Mayor Daniel A. Champagne and the Vernon Town Council relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION #1**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY SCHEDULES THE FOLLOWING BUDGET MEETING DATES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS: MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2024; THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2024; MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2024; THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024, MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024 AND WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024 WITH A START TIME OF 7:00 P.M., AND SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2024 WITH A START TIME OF 9:00 AM. PUBLIC HEARINGS WILL BE SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2024 WITH A START TIME OF 9:05 AM AND THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024 WITH A START TIME OF 7:05 PM, TO HEAR COMMENT AND ANSWER QUESTIONS RELATIVE TO THE 2024-2025 TOWN OF VERNON BUDGET. ALL BUDGET MEETINGS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS WILL BE HELD IN THE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, THIRD FLOOR, TOWN HALL, 14 PARK PLACE, VERNON, CONNECTICUT.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush made a motion to approve the proposed budget meeting dates.
- Council Member Winkler, seconded by Council Member Bush proposed an amendment to the motion to move the March 27, 2024 meeting to April 1, 2024. The motion carried unanimously.
- The main motion carried unanimously.

**PROPOSED MOTION #2**

PURSUANT TO CHARTER, CHAPTER IV "ANNUAL TOWN MEETING", THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY SCHEDULES, TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2024 AS THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING AND FINAL PUBLIC HEARING TO HEAR COMMENT AND ANSWER QUESTIONS RELATIVE TO THE FY 2024-2025 TOWN OF VERNON BUDGET. THE APRIL 23, 2024 PUBLIC HEARING AND ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE ROCKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM, LOVELAND HILL ROAD, VERNON, CONNECTICUT BEGINNING AT 7:00 PM.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member O'Connell, made a motion to approve the proposed the Annual Town Meeting and Public Hearing Schedules dates. The motion carried unanimously.

3. **Request the Town Council approve the new Parks and Recreation Seasonal Rates of pay.** (See memorandum from Dawn Maselek, Assistant Town Administrator relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE NEW PARKS AND RECREATION SEASONAL RATES OF PAY, AND ADDITIONALLY APPROVE TO INCREASE THE RATES OF PAY EQUIVALENT TO THE ANNUAL STATE INCREASE THEREAFTER.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Jim Tedford, made a motion approves the New Parks and Recreation seasonal rates of pay, and additionally approve to increase the rates of pay equivalent to the annual state increase thereafter.
- Discussion ensued.
- The motion carried unanimously.

4. **Request the Town Council approve the application and receipt by the Vernon Senior Center for the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Community Challenge Flagship Grant.** (See memorandum dated February 26, 2024 from Maureen Gabriele, Senior Center Director to Michael J. Purcaro, Town Administrator relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY AUTHORIZES MAYOR DANIEL A. CHAMPAGNE OR HIS DESIGNEE TO EXECUTE THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTS TO MAKE APPLICATION FOR AND RECEIVE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS (AARP) COMMUNITY CHALLENGE FLAGSHIP GRANT FUNDS FOR THE SENIOR CENTER IN THE AMOUNT OF \$5000.00.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion authorize Mayor Daniel A. Champagne or his designee to execute the necessary documents to make application for and receive American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) community challenge flagship grant funds for the senior center in the amount of \$5000.00.
- Maureen Gabriele, Director of Senior Center, presented and answered questions from the Council Members. Discussion ensued.
- The motion carried unanimously.

5. **Request the Town Council approve the purchase of equipment for the Registrar of Voters and two budget amendments for a total of \$12,020.00.** (See memorandum from Chris Prue and M. Lisa Moody, Vernon's Registrars of Voters dated February 29, 2024 to the Town Council, Mayor Champagne and Town Administrator Purcaro relative to same. Also see two budget amendments included for review.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE EQUIPMENT PURCHASE FOR THE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS AND FURTHER APPROVES THE BUDGET AMENDMENTS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$12,020.00.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Abernathy, made a motion to approve the equipment purchase for the registrar of voters and further approves the budget amendments in an amount not to exceed \$12,020.00.
- Mayor Daniel A. Champagne spoke to clarify the motion.
- The motion carried unanimously.

6. **Request the Town Council approve the purchase of a Deep Tine Aerator for the Parks and Recreation Department and the budget amendment for same.** (See memorandum from Marty Sitler, Director of Parks and Recreation dated February 22, 2024 to Michael Purcaro, Town Administrator and budget amendment relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE PURCHASE OF A DEEP TINE AERATOR FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT AND FURTHER APPROVES THE BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR SAME IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$40,000.00.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Rogers, made a motion to approve the purchase of a deep tine aerator for the Parks and Recreation Department and further approves the budget amendment for same in an amount not to exceed \$40,000.00.
- Marty Sitler, Director of Parks and Recreation, presented in details the function and need of the deep tine aerator. He also answered questions from the Council members. Discussion ensued.
- The motion carried unanimously.

7. **Request the Town Council approve structural improvements to the Valley Falls Barn and the budget amendment for same.** (See memorandum dated February 28, 2024 from Marty Sitler, Director of Parks and Recreation to Michael Purcaro, Town Administrator and budget amendment relative to same.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE VALLEY FALL BARN AND FURTHER APPROVES THE BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR SAME IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$25,000.00.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to approve the structural improvements to The Valley Fall Barn and further approve the budget amendment for same in an amount not to exceed \$25,000.00.
- Ann Letendre spoke to clarify the repairs needed, the past estimates and the expenses involved.
- Marty Sitler, Director of Parks and Recreation, spoke to further clarify the proposed improvements.
- The motion carried unanimously.

- L.) **INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES:** None

**M.) ACTION ON ORDINANCE (S) PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED:**

**ACTION ON:** Proposed Ordinance entitled "Ordinance No. , An Ordinance entitled "ESTABLISHMENT OF FEES PAYABLE UNDER BUILDING, FIRE AND DEMOLITION CODE, FIRE MARSHALS AND FIRE HAZARDS, SAFETY OF PUBLIC AND FIRE MARSHAL INSPECTIONS."  
(See Ordinance attached for Council review. A new number will be assigned once the Ordinance has passed Town Council vote.) A copy of the fee schedule is also included for review.)

**PROPOSED MOTION**

THE TOWN COUNCIL, CONSISTENT WITH CHAPTER V, SECTIONS 4 & 6 OF THE VERNON TOWN CHARTER, HEREBY MOVES TO APPROVE THE ORDINANCE ENTITLED, "AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED, "ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_ ESTABLISHMENT OF FEES PAYABLE UNDER BUILDING, FIRE AND DEMOLITION CODE, FIRE MARSHALS AND FIRE HAZARDS, SAFETY OF PUBLIC AND FIRE MARSHAL INSPECTIONS." FURTHERMORE, THE TOWN COUNCIL ACCEPTS THE FIRE MARSHAL'S FEE SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED.

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion to approve the proposed Ordinance.
- The motion carried unanimously.

**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 **FEBRUARY 20, 2024** AND THAT MINUTES OF SAID MEETING BE APPROVED.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made a motion to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the Regular Town Council meeting on February 20, 2024. The motion carried unanimously.

**Q.) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS, PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, CORRESPONDENCE, REPORTS, ETC. NOT REQUIRING ACTION: None**

**E.) EXECUTIVE SESSION**

8:26 PM Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Jim Tedford, 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.



8:40 PM Executive Session #1 ended.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, 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) (D) HEREBY MOVES TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS AND INVITES MICHAEL J. PURCARO, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR TO ATTEND.

8:47 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.

**K. NEW BUSINESS (Rescind)**

- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made a motion to rescind the vote on New Business #7
- The motion carried unanimously.
- Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Abernathy, made a motion to approve the structural improvements to The Valley Fall Barn and further approve the budget amendment for same in an amount not to exceed \$25,000.00.
- Council Member Levesque declared conflict and didn't vote.
- The motion carried.

**E.) EXECUTIVE SESSION (Continues)**

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Bush, made the following motion to **Executive Session #1, Motion #1.**

**MOTION #1**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE ELECTRICAL CONTRACT WITH ELECTRIC ENERGY SYSTEMS CORPORATION, FOR THE CITIZEN'S BLOCK ELECTRICAL PROJECT AS PRESENTED, SAID FUNDING WILL COME FROM FY 2024 BUDGET FUNDS, IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$517,950.00.

The motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Levesque, made the following motion to **Executive Session #1, Motion #2.**

**MOTION #2**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE PLUMBING CONTRACT WITH AIRTEMP FOR THE CITIZEN'S BLOCK PLUMBING PROJECT AS PRESENTED, SAID FUNDING WILL COME FROM CURRENT ARPA FUNDS, IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$222,000.00.

The motion carried unanimously.

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

**MOTION #1**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE CONTRACT WITH OPPORTUNITY WORKS AND THE TOWN OF VERNON FOR THE NIP BOTTLE CAMPAIGN AS PRESENTED.

The motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Wendus, made the following motion to **Executive Session #3.**

**MOTION #1**

THE TOWN COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES THE AGREEMENT FOR THE MUTUAL WAIVER OF BUILDING PERMIT FEES BETWEEN THE TOWN OF VERNON AND THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE PROJECTS.

The motion carried unanimously.

**R.) ADJOURNMENT (8:57 PM)**

Council Member Motola, seconded by Council Member Dauphin, made motion to adjourn at 8:57 PM. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Meriline Sarkar  
Recording Secretary