

April 22, 2008

**MINUTES
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
Public Hearing of the Vernon Town Council
April 22, 2008, 7:30 PM**

Vernon Center Middle School Auditorium, 777 Hartford Turnpike, Vernon, CT

Mayor Jason McCoy called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

There were approximately 98 citizens present at the Annual Town Meeting in addition to the Mayor and members of the town council.

Town Clerk Bernice K. Dixon read into the record the legal notice of the annual Town Meeting and certified that the notice was posted on the bulletin board of the Town Hall on April 15, 2008, and published in the Journal Inquirer on April 15, 2008.

ELECTION OF THE MODERATOR

Mayor McCoy called for nominations for a moderator to preside over the Annual Town Meeting.

Council Member Wheelock, seconded by Council Member Jackle moved to nominate Town Attorney Harold Cummings as moderator. Motion carried unanimously.

The Moderator explained the requirements necessary to speak at the Annual Town Meeting as to residence, age and ownership of property. He reported that pursuant to chapter 7-7 of the CT General Statutes, a petition was delivered to the town clerk within 24 hours of this meeting, which requires the budget to be sent to Referendum rather than voting at the Annual Town Meeting. He informed the citizens that tonight's meeting would serve as a public forum for residents to make comments and ask questions regarding the proposed 2008 – 2009 budget.

Mayor McCoy thanked everyone for their attendance. He provided the citizens with budget highlights informed them a full copy of the budget is available for viewing at the Town Clerk's office.

The Moderator then asked if there was anyone present who wished to comment on the proposed budget.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Herb Slicer, 561 Hartford Turnpike, commended the town council in their efforts to keep costs down. He commented that with any increases in taxes, the budget may not pass. He asked how much of the bonding money is paid out of the current budget? Finance Officer James Luddecke explained that 6% of the current budget is used. Mr. Slicer then asked how much extra it will cost the town due to issues in the bonding business. Mr. Luddecke responded 29%.

Fred Kosak, 34 Farmbrook Lane, asked the Town Council to make every effort to maximize the Grand list by allowing businesses into the Town including Big Box businesses. He asked how much the state formula will contribute towards education. Finance Officer James Luddecke explained that the State will appropriate approximately (as the budget has not passed the Ct General Assembly yet) \$235,000 in additional revenue for both the town and education. The education formula was increased by \$512,000 but certain other state grants were reduced by \$277,000.

Gordon Gibson, 836 Hartford Turnpike, questioned the plowing of sidewalks at 2 churches, the Baptist and the First Congregational Church both located on Hartford Turnpike. Town Council members were unable to answer his question. Mr. Slicer, Vernon Citizen (though his response was not substantiated) explained that the town needed to build a sidewalk on the highway of Rte 30 that needed to go across the front of church property. A gentleman's agreement was reached, the church agreed to allow the sidewalk and the town agreed to plow the sidewalks even though they were located on church property.

Hans Peterson, Windsorville Road, spoke in favor of the budget.

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John Leary, 26 Hany Lane, expressed his appreciation to members of the Council and Mayor McCoy on their efforts in putting together a balanced budget. He felt that the last minute petition for referendum was unnecessary and expensive.

Brendan McKibbin, 12 Reed Street, expressed his concerns that there isn't enough money appropriated to Capitol Improvements budget. He has concerns regarding certain projects won't be completed due to increased costs and the lack of funding available.

Richard Clark, 1158 Hartford Turnpike, Unit 2, commended the Town Council on their efforts in presenting a favorable budget. He expressed an interest in making charter revisions so that only 200 signatures on the petition would not hold the budget back from moving forward.

Joseph Botticello, High Ridge Dr., commended the Town Council and the Mayor on their efforts regarding the budget. He asked questions regarding the health benefits that teachers and town employees receive. Mr Kemp, Board of Education, Hatch Hill Rd., explained that Board of Education employees contribute approximately 16-17% to the premium of the health insurance along with paying co-pays for doctor visits and medications, which is consistent with Town Employees per Town Administrator, Christopher Clark.

Catherine Rebai, 42 Hale Rd., Chair Board of Education, clarified that retirees are offered the same coverage as employees, but they have to pay 100% of the insurance costs. She also made note that the article in the Journal Inquirer describing the bonus the Superintendent receives is inaccurate; he does not receive a bonus. She also stated that she is in favor of this budget.

Tom DiDio 112 Box Mountain Rd., Chair Vernon Democratic Party, questioned the mill rate increase tax payers will receive during the reevaluation phase 2. Finance Officer James Luddecke explained that the mill rate will increase by 1.3 mills for the average homeowner. He also spoke in favor of charter revisions so that a petition doesn't hold the budget back from being approved.

Mayor McCoy explained that CT General Statutes 7-7 that allows citizens to petition the town with a certain amount of signatures as long as it is filed within the 24 hour window prior to the town meeting to require the town to send the budget to referendum. Revising the town charter would not allow the referendum to over rule the CGS.

Joseph Botticello, High Ridge Drive, Thanked the town council for listening and expressed his appreciation to town administrators whom were able to answer his questions immediately.

Town Meeting closed at 8:27 PM.

Received: April 24, 2008

Approved: May 20, 2008

Respectfully Submitted:

Jill Kentfield
Recording Secretary



James E. Krupinski, Asst.