

TOWN OF VERNON

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Annual Town Meeting to Consider Proposed Municipal Budget for Fiscal Year that begins July 1

Residents can comment then vote on budget at meeting at Rockville High School

VERNON, Connecticut – The Annual Town Meeting, where town residents can comment and vote on the proposed town budget, will take place at 7 p.m., Tuesday, April 23, at the Rockville High School auditorium.

The Annual Town Meeting will consist of a public hearing where anyone can comment on the proposed budget of \$109,176,779. The budget will then go to a vote. Registered voters and people who own at least \$1,000 worth of taxable property in Vernon can vote on the proposed budget. If approved, the budget goes into force when the new fiscal year begins on July 1.

Details about the proposed budget can be found on the town website, www.vernon-ct.gov.

The Town Council's proposed budget totals \$109,176,779, which is \$7,198,690 more than the current town budget.

More than half of the budget increase, \$4,616,354, will be covered by the use of reserves and other revenues. The remainder will require a \$3,915,247 tax increase. The mill rate to fund the budget would be 35.09 mills for real estate and personal property, which is 1.7 mills more than the current rate. In accordance with state law, the mill rate for vehicles will remain at 32.46 mills. (A mill equals \$1 for each \$1,000 in assessed property value.)

“Our practice in Vernon is to start the budget process at square one every year,” Mayor Champagne said. “We do not submit budgets built on incremental increases. We start at zero and budget for actual expenses. And we very carefully evaluate every one of those expenses. This budget includes our first proposed increase in the mill rate in six years. We don't make this request of taxpayers lightly. We do believe this is the amount needed to provide the services that Vernon residents have come to expect. As we all know, costs have gone up across the board. Medical insurance is the No. 1 driver of this tax increase.”

The factors driving the increase are:

- \$1,898,676 in health insurance costs, including \$1.7 million for Board of Education health insurance.
- \$911,188 in the education budget.
- \$499,684 in the police budget.
- \$242,616 in pension expenditures.
- \$197,758 in municipal insurance premiums.
- \$165,325 in assorted costs, including utilities.

“Mayor Champagne, the Town Council and town administration are extremely careful stewards of taxpayer dollars,” Town Administrator and Emergency and Risk Management Director Michael Purcaro said. “This is evidenced by our strong reserves and liquidity, manageable fixed costs such as pensions, benefits and debt service, and proactive management of spending controls to address any potential shortfalls. We also maintain a comprehensive risk management program, and shared service program that ensures coordination and efficiency, and reduces overhead costs.”

Finance Director John Kleinhans said Vernon continues to enjoy an excellent credit rating, which helps control capital costs, and continues to employ innovative administrative and financial policies and procedures that control costs and save tax dollars.

“Careful analysis of revenues and expenditures and fiscal restraint are part of the DNA in Vernon,” Kleinhans said. “When we ask the taxpayers for an increase, it is because we have exhausted all other opportunities to hold the line.”

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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