

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Verona Township Council on Monday, March 17, 2025, beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building, 600 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, New Jersey, and via Zoom video conferencing.

Call to Order:

The Municipal Clerk reads the notice of Open Public Meetings Act.

Roll Call:

Mayor Tamburro, Deputy Mayor McEvoy, Councilman Roman, Councilwoman McGrath, Councilwoman Holland, Township Manager Kevin O'Sullivan, Township Attorney Brian Aloia and Municipal Clerk Jennifer Kiernan are present.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Tamburro presents a Certificate of Recognition to the 7th grade girls suburban basketball team in honor of their championship season.

Essex County liaison, J. Coltre wishes everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day and reports on the various events the County is hosting during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival in Branch Brook Park.

Mayor Tamburro wishes everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day and states that the Township held the flag raising to celebrate Irish-American Heritage Month before the March 3rd Council Meeting. He reports that the VEC met to view the site plans for Everett Field. He thanks Mrs. Ellenbogen and her 3rd grade class at Forest Avenue School for inviting him to read to them on Read Across America Day. He attended the Boy Scouts annual Pancake Breakfast. He reports that the Council will have a joint meeting with the Board of Education on March 25th in the high school auditorium.

The Mayor speaks of the incident in the Municipal parking lot on Saturday night. He thanks the VPD responding officers and the mutual aid agencies for their assistance. He asks Chief Kiernan to update the public. Chief Kiernan reports that the police department is grateful to the County for offering all resources necessary. He states he has received personal phone calls from the Essex County Prosecutor's Office Chief of Detectives, Mitch McGuire, County Sheriff Amir Jones as well as the County Prosecutor himself, Theodore Stevens who assured him that all available resources are being put forward in this investigation. He states the police department remains resolute in the efforts in establishing the identity of the individuals involved and is confident the exceptional work being done by our officers will lead to the arrest of those responsible for this reckless and outrageous behavior. The Chief reports that this appears to be an isolated incident between a small group of party-goers and there is no active threat to the public at this time. This investigation is still very fluid and ongoing and the Township is currently being assisted by the Essex County Prosecutor's Office and therefore, no further comments regarding this case shall be made at this time.

Township Manager Kevin O'Sullivan states that the Township's appreciation extends to all those neighboring municipalities and the County Prosecutor's Office for their support. The Township has begun reviewing the Palmetto venue's property files in response to incoming complaints over the weekend and is expediting and completing a zoning review of the property and determined that the business was improperly given a zoning permit and certificate of occupancy based upon the decision of a former employee who was not authorized to issue such a decision and therefore the continued use of the property as an event space is neither permitted nor authorized. Both the property owner and business owner have been notified of these findings and have been provided 45 days to either terminate the rental space use or seek relief from the Board of Adjustment.

Given the attendance in Chambers, the Mayor calls for a Public Comment to residents to speak on only this matter:

Kristin Kistner, Verona, New Jersey
Sharon O'Donnell, Verona, New Jersey
Dex Polizzi, Verona, New Jersey
Emily Polizzi, Verona, New Jersey
Erin Ozolins, Verona, New Jersey
Andrew Duburow, Verona, New Jersey
Pam Priscoe, Verona, New Jersey
Paul Petrangeli, Verona, New Jersey
Christian Strumolo, Verona, New Jersey

Stanley Berkowitz, Verona, New Jersey
Mary Berkowitz, Verona, New Jersey

At 7:58 p.m., the Mayor states that in order to discuss the concerns of the public more completely, he calls for an executive session at this time. Motion is made by Council Roman; seconded by Councilwoman McGrath.
Vote: 5 ayes.

RESOLUTION No. 2025-064

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor McEvoy; seconded by Councilman Roman that the following resolution be adopted:

PERMITTING ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, permits the exclusion of the Public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Verona, County of Essex, State of New Jersey, as follows:

- The public shall be excluded from discussion of an action upon the hereinafter specified subject matter.
- 1. Purchase, Lease or Acquisition of Real Property pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (5)*
 - 2. Pending, Ongoing, or Anticipated Litigation and Contract Negotiations pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (7)*

ROLL CALL:
AYES: Holland, McGrath, Roman, McEvoy, Tamburro
NAYS:

Council returns back to Public Session at 8:22 p.m.

Manager’s Report:

Township Manager Kevin O’Sullivan reports that the Township as settled with Fair Share Housing on the obligatory number of affordable housing units which is 155 units. Therefore, a resolution is before the Council tonight under New Business for consideration to authorize the settlement agreement which protects the Township from any liability or additional units.

Budget Approval:

Jennifer Muscara, CFO is present for the approval of the 2025 Municipal Budget.

ORDINANCE No. 2025-07

**AN ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION
LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK
(N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14)**

The Municipal Clerk reads Ordinance 2025-07 into the record.

Motion to move the ordinance is made by Deputy Mayor McEvoy; seconded by Councilwoman McGrath.

ROLL CALL:
AYES: Holland, McGrath, Roman, McEvoy, Tamburro
NAYS:

Ordinance 2025-07 is introduced by a vote of 5-0. It will be published according to law and a public hearing will be held on April 7, 2025.

RESOLUTION No. 2025-065

A motion was made by Councilwoman Holland; seconded by Councilman Roman that the following resolution be adopted:

INTRODUCTION OF THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex, New Jersey that the following statements of revenues and appropriations shall constitute the Municipal Budget of the Township of Verona for the 2025 calendar year.

General Appropriations:	<u>Year 2025</u>
1. Appropriations within “CAPS” (H-1 Sheet 19)	\$ 21,866,966.00
2. Appropriations excluded from “CAPS” (H-2 Sheet 28)	\$ 5,435,073.00
3. Reserve for Uncollected Taxes (M-Sheet 29)	<u>\$ 1,500,000.00</u>
4. Total General Appropriations (Item 9, Sheet 29)	\$ 28,802,039
5. Less: Anticipated Revenues Other than Current Property Tax (Item 5, Sheet 11)	<u>\$ (9,373,381.00)</u>
6. Less: Minimum Library Tax (Item 6(c), Sheet 11)	<u>\$ (1,140,016.00)</u>
7. Difference: Amount to be raised by Taxes for support of the Municipal Budget (as follows) (a) Local Tax for Municipal Purposes including Reserve for Uncollected Taxes (Item 6(a), Sheet 11)	\$ 18,288,642.00

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said Budget will be published in the Monday, March 24, 2025 edition of the Star Ledger.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township Council of the Township of Verona does hereby approve the preceding as the Budget for the 2025 year:

A Hearing on the Budget and Tax Resolution will be held both in-person and via a Zoom video conference on April 21, 2025 at 7 o’clock p.m. at which time and place discussions to said Budget and Tax Resolution for 2025 may be presented by taxpayers or other interested persons.

<https://zoom.us/j/95262662770>

Via telephone, please dial 1(312)626-6799 or 1(646)558-8656

Use Zoom Meeting ID: 952-6266-2770, when prompted for a Participant ID, press #

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that A copy of the 2025 Municipal Budget and tax resolution will be available at no cost during regular business hours by contacting the Municipal Clerk’s Office at 973-857-4770 or visiting the Township’s website at www.veronanj.org/budgetinfo for the members of the general public who shall request the same up to and including the time when the Township Council shall further consider this for final passage. All persons interested in the proposed budget will have an opportunity to address the Township Council during the aforementioned public hearing.

ROLL CALL:
AYES: Holland, McGrath, Roman, McEvoy, Tamburro
NAYS:

Councilmember’s Reports:

Deputy Mayor McEvoy reports that both the Historical Preservation Commission and Verona Sustainable Green Team are in need of members. He thanks all the first responders and surrounding agencies for their quick response to Saturday night’s incident and calls out the racial bias and rhetoric that is all over social media platforms & posts.

Councilman Alex Roman thanks the police, rescue squad and Township Administration in response to the event on Saturday night. He attended the Islamic Center and Clergy Council for the interfaith Fatiha celebration.

Councilwoman McGrath thanks the police chief and officers and first responders. The Neighborhood Traffic & Safety Advisory Committee met as did the Shade Tree Commission and MIAAC will be hosting the Women of Impact panel at 3pm on Sunday at the Community Center.

Councilwoman Holland acknowledges VMAC’s Family Night on March 13th. She encourages everyone to attend the Women of Impact Panel on Sunday. She also reports the Winter Moratorium ended March 13th.

Public Comment:

Dex Polizzi, Verona, New Jersey
Kristen Kistner, Verona, New Jersey
Paul Petrangeli, Verona, New Jersey

Ordinances for Adoption:

ORDINANCE # 2025-06
FIXING THE SALARY AND COMPENSATION OF THE
DEPUTY MANAGER

The Municipal Clerk reads Ordinance 2025-06 into the record.
Motion to move the ordinance is made by Councilwoman McGrath; seconded by Councilman Roman.

ROLL CALL:
AYES: Holland, McGrath, Roman, McEvoy, Tamburro
NAYS:

Ordinance 2025-06 adopted by a vote of 5-0-. It will be published according to law.

Ordinances for Introduction:

ORDINANCE No. 2025-08
AMENDING CHAPTER 140, VEHICLES & TRAFFIC, ARTICLE XII,
SCHEDULE IV “TIME LIMIT PARKING”

The Municipal Clerk reads Ordinance 2025-08 into the record.
Motion to move the ordinance is made by Mayor Tamburro; seconded Deputy Mayor McEvoy.

ROLL CALL:
AYES: Holland, McGrath, Roman, McEvoy, Tamburro
NAYS:

Ordinance 2025-08 is introduced by a vote of 5-0. It will be published according to law and a public hearing will be held on April 7, 2025.

Consent Agenda:

Public comment on consent agenda:

None.

Minutes from the March 3, 2025 meeting are unanimously approved.

RESOLUTION No. 2025-066

A motion was made by Councilman Roman; seconded by Deputy Mayor McEvoy that the following resolution be adopted:

**DESIGNATING A MUNICIPAL STORMWATER MANAGEMENT
COORDINATOR**

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection mandates that a Stormwater Management Coordinator be designated for each municipality, and;

WHEREAS, Township Manger Kevin O’Sullivan possess the necessary requirements to serve as Stormwater Management Coordinator.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Verona that Kevin O’Sullivan be designated Municipal Stormwater Management Coordinator and George Zhender of the Public Works Department serve as back-up Coordinator.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Holland, McGrath, Roman, McEvoy, Tamburro

NAYS:

RESOLUTION No. 2025-067

A motion was made by Councilman Roman; seconded by Deputy Mayor McEvoy that the following resolution be adopted:

REFUNDING ESCROW PAYMENT

WHEREAS, escrow fees, for the Board of Adjustment, were received from Vanessa Juarez and the fees have been held in Trust; and

WHEREAS, certification has been received from our Board of Adjustment Secretary to release these funds, from Trust, as follows:

ESCROW AMOUNT	EXPENSES	AMOUNT TO BE REFUNDED
\$2,425.00	\$2,046.12	\$378.88

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex New Jersey that the Chief Financial Officer and Tax Collector be authorized to refund, from the Trust Account, \$378.88 to Vanessa Juarez.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Holland, McGrath, Roman, McEvoy, Tamburro

NAYS:

New Business:

RESOLUTION No. 2025-068

A motion was made by Councilman Roman; seconded by Deputy Mayor McEvoy that the following resolution be adopted:

**AUTHORIZING THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COUNSEL FOR THE TOWNSHIP
OF VERONA TO EXECUTE A MEDIATION AGREEMENT WITH FAIR SHARE
HOUSING CENTER**

WHEREAS, on March 20, 2024, Governor Murphy signed P.L. 2024, c.2. into law, which established a new framework for determining and enforcing municipalities' affordable housing obligations under the Mount Laurel doctrine and the Fair Housing Act, N.J.S.A. 52:27D-301 et seq. (the "Amended Act"); and

WHEREAS, the Amended Act required the Department of Community Affairs (the "DCA") to prepare a report with the calculation of the regional and municipal Prospective Need and the municipal Present Need for the Fourth Round in accordance with the formula required by the Amended Act; and

WHEREAS, the DCA released this report entitled "Affordable Housing Obligations for 2025-2035 (Fourth Round)" on October 18, 2024 (the "DCA Report"); and

WHEREAS, the DCA report concluded that the Township's fair share obligations for the Fourth Round included a Present Need of 0 units and a Prospective Need of 173 units; and

WHEREAS, the Township Council adopted the required binding resolution of participation on January 20, 2025 (the "Resolution"), proposing to set the Township's affordable housing obligations for the Fourth Round to include a Present Need of 0 units and a Prospective Need of 149 units, and, on January 22, 2025, the Township filed the necessary complaint, with the Resolution annexed thereto as Exhibit A, with the Superior Court of New Jersey initiating a declaratory judgment action bearing Docket No. ESX-L-594-25 (the "DJ Action") before the Affordable Housing Dispute Resolution Program (the "Program"), established pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:27D-313.2 of the Amended Act, in accordance with the requirements of the Amended Act, and the timeframes set forth in Directive #14-24 issued December 13, 2024 by the Administrative Office of the Courts (the "Directive"); and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the timeframes set forth in the Amended Act and the Directive, FSHC filed a timely objection to the Township's Resolution, as presented in the DJ Action, on February 28, 2025; and

WHEREAS, FSHC's objection contended that the Township had improperly calculated its Prospective Need obligations and should be required to utilize the calculation prepared by the DCA and set forth within the DCA Report; and

WHEREAS, the Township disputes the contentions raised in FSHC's objection; and

WHEREAS, the parties have engaged in the mediation process provided by the Program and conferred and reached an accord setting forth the Township's Fourth Round Prospective Need obligation, without either party admitting the validity of the other's claims; and

WHEREAS, FSHC and the Township, recognizing that the accord reached by these parties as to the Township's Fourth Round Prospective Need Obligation was reached during the mediation process provided by the Program and prior to the adjudication of any challenges by the Program or any potential subsequent review in the judicial system, by entering into the mediation agreement in the form attached hereto, each acknowledge and agree that 155 units is within the range of possibilities of outcomes in the Program for the Township's Fourth Round Prospective Need; and

WHEREAS, resolving the Township's Fourth Round Prospective Need Obligation at this juncture and allowing the Township to move forward with preparing its Fourth Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan ("Fourth Round HEFSP") is important to the interests of the Township and the interests of lower-income households; and

WHEREAS, the Township Council, acknowledging the benefits of resolving the Township's Fourth Round Prospective Need Obligation by way of agreement with FSHC and avoiding any further challenges thereto and thereby avoiding unnecessary costly litigation, consent to the execution of the

attached mediation agreement on behalf of the Township and, upon the approval of the fully executed mediation agreement by the Program, setting forth the Township’s Fourth Round Present and Prospective Need Obligations and foreclosing FSHC from presenting any further challenge to said obligations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Township of Verona, Essex County, New Jersey, hereby authorizes and directs the Township’s Affordable Housing Counsel, Jaime R. Placek, Esq. of DeCotiis, FitzPatrick, Cole & Giblin, LLP, to execute the mediation agreement in the form attached hereto on behalf of the Township, with such changes thereto that may be deemed appropriate and necessary by the Township’s Affordable Housing Legal Counsel, and to take all actions necessary to effectuate the terms set forth in the mediation agreement.

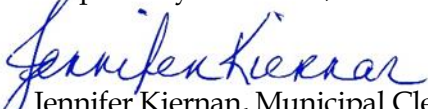
ROLL CALL:
AYES: Holland, McGrath, Roman, McEvoy, Tamburro
NAYS:

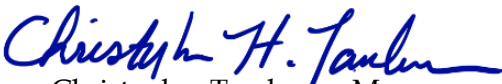
Public Comment:
Peggy Wood, Verona, New Jersey
Kevin Ryan, Verona, New Jersey

Council goes into Executive Session at 9:20 p.m. and returns to the Public Session at 10:12 p.m.

Adjournment:
Motion to adjourn is made by Councilman Roman; seconded by Councilwoman McGrath at 10:13 p.m.
Vote: 5 ayes.

The next meeting is April 7, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Kiernan, Municipal Clerk


Christopher Tamburro, Mayor

APPROVED: April 7, 2025