

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Verona Township Council on Monday, December 6, 2021, beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building, 600 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, New Jersey and via Zoom video conferencing platform.

Call to Order:

Municipal Clerk reads notice of Open Public Meetings law. The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been satisfied with respect to this meeting of the Township Council which is being held via Zoom video conferencing and in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the time and date were included in the public meeting notice. This information, along with the public internet link and telephone call-in information was posted in the Municipal Building, and sent the official newspapers of the Township, the Verona-Cedar Grove Times and the Star Ledger and MyVeronaNJ.com, TAPinto and the Verona/Cedar Grove PATCH, the official online news source(s) of the Township, at least 48 hours preceding the start time of this meeting. The agenda and public handouts for this meeting can be viewed online at www.veronanj.org/councilmeetings. A public comment period will be held in the order it is listed on the meeting agenda and instructions on how to comment will be provided at the appropriate time. This meeting is being recorded, both audibly and visually for retention purposes and for rebroadcast on the Township's YouTube.

Roll Call:

Mayor Alex Roman, Deputy Mayor Christine McGrath, Councilman Jack McEvoy, Councilwoman Cynthia Holland and Councilman Chris Tamburro. Township Manager Matthew Cavallo, Township Attorney Brian Aloia and Municipal Clerk Jennifer Kiernan are also present.

Mayor's Report:

Essex County Liaison Julius Coltre states vaccines are still being administered at Essex County College, Kmart and Sears in the Livingston Mall. Five - 11 year olds, Monday-Friday from 4-7pm, Saturdays 9am-5pm. Children ages 12+ are Monday-Friday from 9am-4pm, Saturdays 9am-5pm. Adults can come at any time. All appointments can be made at EssexCovid.org or call 973-877-8456. The Essex County Public Health Office is conducting a County-Community Health Assessment, which identifies the issues effecting communities. The County urges all to go to www.EssexCountyNJ.org and look for the link. The survey runs until March 31, 2022. Results should be released in April. This is an opportunity for townships to receive grants and other health assistance. Food distribution will take place on December 21 in Weequahic Park beginning at 9am. Holiday Lights will be held from December 10 through December 31 from 5-9pm. The Turtle Back Zoo will be closed on December 24.

Mayor Roman reads a Proclamation for Share Your Light Night. Representatives from the Women's Club are in attendance for a photograph with the Council. Mayor Roman reports the Fair in the Square has a large turnout and had many vendors. The Menorah Lighting was a great event. The Planning Board approved the PIRHL redevelopment at their last meeting by a unanimous vote. Mayor Roman welcomes Dr. Lydia Furnari to the Board of Education as the Interim Superintendent.

Deputy Mayor McGrath thanks the residents for attending the Fair in the Square and congratulates the staff on its success as there were many young entrepreneur-vendors. She thanks Steven Neale for partnering with C.H.I.L.D. for a special event during Fair in the Square for neuro sensitive children. She thanks Rabbi Tobin for presiding over the Hanukkah celebration. She visited over a dozen local businesses during Small Business Saturday. She thanks Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill for visiting Blue Hippo and the Verona Diner. She attended Chrill Care on Bloomfield Avenue along with the Congresswoman and Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo to promote Meals on Wheels and thanks their staff for their hospitality.

Councilman McEvoy reports that the Planning Board has 2 meeting last week and approved the final site plan for PIRHL. He thanks the members for the hours they put in and the developer for working with us. He was happy to see the Fair in the Square full of tables. The Hanukkah celebration was great last night and he hopes it will continue.

Councilman Tamburro echoes the comments of the Council members. He states it was a great weekend and indicative of the small town charm we offer. He thanks the Women's Club for holding Share Your Light Night and thanks the Fire Department in advance for Santa Sunday. The Councilman encourages everyone to consider donating to the Children's Fund, which is well curated and serves between 75-80 families.

Councilwoman Holland reports that she attended the Fair in the Square with her family this past Saturday and the kids had a great time. Santa lighting the Christmas tree is always a great highlight. She is so thankful to VFD for supporting Santa last weekend and this coming weekend and looks forward to a subcommittee meeting with the VFD in the coming weeks. She also attended the Hanukkah celebration last night with her family and found it so delightful and joyous.

Councilwoman Holland acknowledges a very helpful status memorandum from the Township's Engineering Manager, which highlighted many of the challenges in that area. Our aging infrastructure and the engineering work is so critical to our residents. Councilwoman Holland joined the Engineering Manager, Mr. DeCarlo, and some of the Rutgers University graduate students who are working on doing some flood mapping for the Township. This mapping is particularly important because so many of the decisions regarding the Peckman River are based on outdated studies -- looking at an Army Corps study that informed their 2020 decision to proceed in Little Falls and Woodland Park -- they relied on data from 1981 for Verona. While speaking to the DEP commissioners at the League of Municipalities, they also underscored the importance of updated mapping to aid the Township in getting necessary permits regarding the river and our stormwater management.

She also attended a day-long summit on PFAS and watched some of the documentaries that really highlighted the PFOA crisis and found the summit tremendously informative. Later that same week, she had a tour of our Linn Drive and Fairview Avenue wells, our water tanks, and the water distribution system. Councilwoman Holland states, "These assets represent a major public investment; having an Asset Management Plan offers increased knowledge of the system to allow better financial and management decisions - like the one for which the Township Council recently authorized to be developed via Colliers Engineering. Efficient system operation and maintenance is essential to public health and safety and protection of water quality. Water is necessary to life and I cannot underscore enough the importance of managing our utilities properly for the health and safety of our residents. And, as Manager Cavallo acknowledged, regardless of later notices and the status of our current wells, a decision was made to purchase water from PVWC to ensure that residents in Verona receive water that complies with the DEP regulations."

Councilwoman Holland got her booster shot last week at the Essex County Kmart facility and compliments the county again for their tremendous response to the pandemic and excellent vaccine roll out. Her children are getting their second shots this week.

Finally, she emphasizes that the Governor's grace period on public utility shut offs for non-payment expires at the end of this month. If anyone is behind on their utility bills, NOW is the time to speak with your utility company and work on a payment arrangement. There is a tremendous amount of funding that has come from the Federal government to the State and it is available to rate payers. Your utility companies are obligated to work with you on a payment plan, so there is no reason to be subject to any shut-offs.

Public Comment on Consent Agenda Items:

None.

RESOLUTION No. 2021-162

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

**AUTHORIZE BUDGET TRANSFERS BETWEEN
APPROPRIATION ACCOUNTS PURSUANT TO N.J.S.A. 40A:40-1**

WHEREAS, certain transfers of funds for various 2021 budget appropriations are necessary to cover anticipated expenditures; and

WHEREAS, *N.J.S.A. 40A:4-58* provides for transfer of appropriations with an excess over and above the amount deemed necessary to fulfill their purposes to those appropriations deemed to be insufficient; and

WHEREAS, the appropriations subject to fund transfers hereby are not within those restricted by *N.J.S.A. 40A:4-58* for transfer purposes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex, New Jersey that the Temporary Chief Financial Officer shall and is hereby authorized to make transfers between appropriations accounts of the 2021 Municipal Budget as follows:

	TO	FROM
Construction Code - Other Expenses	10,000.00	
Town Fields - Other Expenses	2,300.00	
Fire Department - Other Expenses	10,500.00	
Health - Other Expenses	3,000.00	
Legal - Other Expenses	10,000.00	
Recycling - Salary and Wages	2,200.00	
Rent Leveling - Salary and Wages	1,000.00	
Vehicle Maintenance - Other Expenses	10,000.00	
Zoning - Salary and Wages	1,000.00	
Planning Board - Salary and Wages		2,000.00
Recreation - Salary and Wages		22,000.00
Recycling - Other Expenses		2,200.00
Street & Highway - Other Expenses		10,000.00
Tax Collection - Salary and Wages		13,800.00
	50,000.00	50,000.00

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Holland, Tamburro, McEvoy, McGrath, Roman

NAYS:

RESOLUTION No. 2021-163

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

**CANCELLATION OF UNSPENT EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS
RELATED TO TROPICAL STORM IDA**

WHEREAS, on September 9, 2021 the Township Council adopted Resolution No. 2021-117 creating an emergency appropriation in the amount of \$350,000 to cover the expenses related to Tropical Storm Ida; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined that proper fiscal budgetary practice requires cancellation of unspent funds from the emergency appropriation related to Tropical Storm Ida in the amount of \$100,000.00.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex, New Jersey that the following unspent funds be cancelled and the Temporary Chief Financial Officer is directed to make the appropriate Journal Entries.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Holland, Tamburro, McEvoy, McGrath, Roman

NAYS:

RESOLUTION No. 2021-164

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

**CANCELLATION OF UNSPENT SPECIAL EMERGENCY
APPROPRIATIONS RELATED TO THE SPECIAL EMERGENCY -
REVALUATION**

WHEREAS, on June 19, 2017 the Township Council adopted Ordinance No. 2017-16 authorizing the creation of a five-year special emergency appropriation in the amount of \$400,000 to cover the expenses related to the preparation and execution of a complete program of revaluation of all real property within the Township of Verona for the use by the Township Assessor pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 40A:4-55*; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined that proper fiscal budgetary practice requires cancellation of unspent funds from the five-year special emergency appropriation related to the revaluation of all real property within the Township of Verona in the amount of \$15,000.00.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex, New Jersey that the following unspent funds be cancelled and the Temporary Chief Financial Officer is directed to make the appropriate Journal Entries.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Holland, Tamburro, McEvoy, McGrath, Roman

NAYS:

RESOLUTION No. 2021-165

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor McGrath; seconded by Councilman Tamburro 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 exists.

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

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of an action upon the hereinafter specified subject matter.
 - a. Pending, Ongoing, or Anticipated Litigation and Contract Negotiations pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (7)*
 - RiseAgainstHate.org v. Verona
 - Spectrum360/BNE Canoebrook Redevelopment
 - Kensington Senior Development v. Verona and the Zoning Board
 - b. Personnel Matters pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(8)*
 - Planning Board vacancy -
 - Township Manager vacancy - employment, appointment, terms & conditions of employment
 - Chief Financial Officer vacancy - employment, appointment, terms & conditions of employment
 - c. Material the disclosure of which constitutes an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(3)* and Anticipated litigation pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(7)*
 - Investigation briefing

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Holland, Tamburro, McEvoy, McGrath, Roman

NAYS:

New/Unfinished Business:

Deputy Mayor McGrath and Councilwoman Holland give a presentation on the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion subcommittee. There is brief discussion as to the process to form a DEI

committee names Multi-Inclusion & Accessibility Advisory Committee. Mayor Roman and Deputy Mayor McGrath discuss stormwater management and an opportunity to join an interlocal co-operative with Caldwell and other surrounding towns. Mayor Roman discusses goal setting and downtown business development. He would like to start with a building inventory to determine where attention should be initially focused. Councilman McEvoy states the Tree Ordinance needs a touch-up. He suggests the tree companies register with the Town and receive a license to remove trees for one year.

Public Comment:

Herb Lev, [REDACTED]
Robert Blitz, [REDACTED]

Adjournment:

Council enters into Executive Session at 9:12 pm. Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:33 p.m. is made by Councilman Tamburro; seconded by Deputy Mayor McGrath.

The next regular scheduled meeting of the Township Council is December 20, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Jennifer Kiernan, Municipal Clerk


Alex Roman, Mayor

APPROVED: December 20, 2021