

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Verona Township Council on Monday, April 13, 2020, beginning at 7:00 p.m. via teleconference.

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; specifically, the time, date and location were included in the annual notice of meetings adopted by the governing body, posted in the Municipal Building, and sent to the official newspapers of the Township, the Verona Cedar Grove Times and the Star Ledger. Additionally, the agenda for this meeting was posted in the Municipal Building and sent to the two newspapers before 4:30 p.m. on the Friday preceding this meeting.

Roll Call:

Mayor Jack McEvoy, Deputy Mayor Alex Roman, Councilman Kevin Ryan, Councilman Ted Giblin and Councilwoman Christine McGrath. Township Manager Matthew Cavallo, Brian Aloia, Township Attorney, Municipal Clerk Jennifer Kiernan, Director of Economic Development and Administration Steven Neale and Police Chief Chris Kiernan are also present.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor McEvoy calls for the pledge of allegiance.

Mr. McEvoy reports the four residents have passed from COVID-19. He urges the public to continue practicing social distancing, wear protective gear when going outdoors, pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order. He expresses his condolences to all the families whose relatives have passed. Longtime resident and former councilwoman Inez Walsh passed away at the age of 85. She was active within the Township. He also wants to send a special thank you out to all the children of Verona who are affected by this change and praises their sacrifices as they remain at home and continue with online learning.

He reminds everyone to respond to the 2020 Census. To date, 62% of the Township residents have responded. It is important to get a complete count to receive accurate funding and grants. He also congratulates Councilman Ryan on the birth of his second grandchild.

Manager's Report:

The Township Manager reports that as of today there are 64 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and four (4) deaths due to COVID-19 complications. Emergency Services including the Police Department, Rescue Squad and Fire Department are still operating without major issues at this time. There were two police officers with confirmed cases of COVID-19 however both these officers will be ending their quarantine this week and are returning to work.

The Township's Emergency Services wishes to thank all the residents and businesses throughout the Township for their overwhelming support in donating supplies. They are also grateful to all the residents and businesses that have donated food to the front line Emergency Service workers that are still working. In order to maintain the Social Distancing requirements and uphold the Governor's Executive Orders, the Township's Emergency Services will not be participating in any parades or fulfilling any drive-by requests for birthdays or other occasions along Township streets.

The Township continues to maintain a list of over close to 70 volunteers right now but fortunately have not had to utilize them too much right now. There are coordinated efforts to provide some senior residents food and a couple other families in need with some meals and fresh produce. We have received a lot of gift cards from local businesses and they will be distributed out as needed. The requests have not been frequent at all though, at least not yet. We are in constant contact with the Police Department and Rescue Squad to make sure anyone they see or hear of in need receives help.

As of right now, we are not sure if the pool will operate, this is up to the Governor. However we are preparing that we will be able to open the pool at some point during the summer so all work necessary to get it ready is being done. Registrations are currently on hold until we get

closer to a date when the quarantine will be over.

At this time, the State of New Jersey has not permitted municipalities to change the May 1<sup>st</sup> property tax deadline or extend the grade period beyond the statutory ten day maximum. If the State permits either of these changes, the Township will review and act accordingly. We have received almost total compliance payments with the last Water/Sewer Payments that were mailed on 2/21/20.

As of today, the Census Bureau reports that the Self-Response Rate to the Census mailings in New Jersey is 49%. Mr. Cavallo reports that Verona has a Self-Response Rate of 62.1%. We will be continuing with our social media posts and hope this number will continue to rise up to 100%.

Mr. Cavallo strongly urges the public to STOP flushing items down toilets that are not intended to be flushed down the toilet. Over the weekend the Township had four (4) calls for backups that were caused by wipes, gloves and rags that should not have been flushed down the toilet.

The paving of Linn Drive will hopefully be completed by the end of May. All Boards and Committee meetings have been suspended until further notice. The Township Manager and Township Clerk are working through logistic issues with the Land Use Board Attorneys to identify usable virtual meeting platforms so the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment can meet if necessary.

#### Councilmember's Reports:

Deputy Mayor Roman wished to recognize the work of all the first responders. He praises the Verona employees as he has watched this organization immediately transition into a remote workforce, getting work done for the public while maintaining safety. Everyone deserves credit for keeping essential services going.

Councilman Ryan thanks all the supermarket clerks and food distribution areas for putting themselves in the line. He states that anyone suffering from the loss of employment should know the agencies are overwhelmed. He also reports that Assemblyman Jay Webber has initiated a petition to lift restriction in parks.

Councilman Giblin states that the government had to place restrictions in place for good reason. He states that he has seen a lot of people out walking and biking in the street. He asks them to stay alert and for drivers to be careful. He applauds the residents stating they have done well with social distancing. He also is very appreciative of all the doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals who are facing dangerous circumstances. He also states he has known Inez Walsh for many years and she will be missed.

Councilwoman McGrath sends her condolences to the residents for their loss of a loved one. She states it will take a long time for us to process these losses. She praises the efforts of Kate Curren who organized a fund to deliver meals to workers on the front lines. She also applauds Sarah Latson for her assembling a drive to deliver Chapstick to medical workers at Mountainside Hospital. The Councilwoman also reports that the library is making PPE from printers. She also recommends that small business owners and laid off workers visit Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill's website for information at [www.Sherrill.house.gov](http://www.Sherrill.house.gov).

#### **RESOLUTION No. 2020-086**

A motion was made by Mayor McEvoy; seconded by Councilman Ryan 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 Council 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.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
  - a. Contract Negotiations pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (7)*
    - GTI
3. It is anticipated at this time that the above stated subject matter will be made public when said subject has been fully discussed by the Council, and the attorney rules this matter may be brought before the public without jeopardizing any pending litigation.
4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

**ROLL CALL:**

**AYES: McGrath, Giblin, Ryan, Roman, McEvoy**

**NAYS:**

Public Comment:

Kathleen Laterza, 810 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, New Jersey  
Phil DeLisi, 31 Manor Road, Verona, New Jersey  
Regina French, 44 Brookside Terrace, Verona, New Jersey

Adjournment:

Council goes into Executive Session at 7:49 p.m. Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 pm is motioned by Councilman Giblin; seconded by Deputy Mayor Roman.

The next regular scheduled meeting is April 27, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jennifer Kiernan*  
Jennifer Kiernan, Municipal Clerk

*Jack McEvoy*  
Jack McEvoy, Mayor

APPROVED: April 27, 2020