

TOWNSHIP OF VERONA
COUNTY OF ESSEX, NEW JERSEY



VERONA MUNICIPAL ALLIANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

7:00 P.M.

January 28, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: With a quorum of members in attendance, year-to-date expenditures totaling \$5,382 in support of various programs and initiatives were reviewed. Budget modifications to the fiscal year 2025 grant were reviewed and unanimously approved by Members. Issues for discussion included: cannabis businesses in Verona, NARCAN information to students and the public, upcoming events, election of officers, appointment of members, and anticipated FY26 GCSUD grant.

CALL TO ORDER- meeting called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairwoman Kimberly Manis via zoom call.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE-

Chairwoman Manis read Open Public Meeting Act statement, and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Members in attendance: Colin Boyle (Community Representative), Katie Cuartas (Laning School Representative), Jim Day (Community Representative), Diane DiGiuseppe (Superintendent-Verona Public Schools), Councilwoman Cynthia Holland (Verona Town Council), Ann Jocelyn (Coordinator), Rachel Klansky (Past Chairperson), Kimberly Manis (Chair - Community Representative), Carol Lynn Moy (VHS/HBW Representative), Officer Kirby-Pinto (Verona Police Department), Staci Puleo (Secretary - Brookdale Avenue Representative), Tim Schmidt (Forest Ave Representative), Regina Tully (FN Brown Representative). There were no members of the public in attendance.

With a quorum of Members in attendance, Chairwoman Manis proceeded with official business by reminding members of the VMAC vision, mandate, and the mission to celebrate and cultivate the compassion, character, and confidence it takes to make good choices.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES from October 22, 2024 Meeting- Rachel Klansky moved to approve, Jim Day seconded approval. All voted in favor of accepting the minutes as circulated.

FINANCIAL & PROGRAM REVIEW

FY25 grant total funding \$21,151.58: \$16,921.26 GCSUD and \$4,230.32 Township.

Expenditures Cumulative \$5,382.56 of which \$2,340.09 expended in 2Q25 (October-December): \$2,277.62 stipends to three school-program advisors. \$62.47 expenses for Fair in the Square. Recorded \$7,298.93 in-kind donation: *volunteer time (\$3,465.47)*, *room use related to restaurants supporting Family Night (\$1,800)*, *Township opioid grant funds for Red Ribbon Week and DEA Take-Back Day activities (\$2,350.48)*. \$10,042.47 has been encumbered for the 3rd quarter.

Program Review

- **Family Night** Great turnout October 9, 18 local restaurants offering coupons and displaying posters. Organized by Members Klansky and Manis. Next Family Night is March 13
- **SAFE Homes**- November was declared SAFE Homes Month in Verona by the Council and promoted through weekly social media postings. The list is being prepared for distribution to 556 families – up from 538 in 2024. New families are joining but also families are dropping off due to moving or aging out of schools. Acknowledge difficulty of monitoring compliance as this registry is an honor system. Colin Boyle has worked on this program for many years.
- **DEA Take Back** Oct 16 visit by the Verona Police and Rescue Squad to the Senior Citizen Club meeting and on Oct 26 at Verona's Fall Fest. Funding from the Township Opioid Settlement Grants funded support materials for these efforts led by Officer Kirby-Pinto. Officer Kirby also led Verona's participation in the **Opioid Awareness Walk** that afternoon. Will work to include more Verona students in 2026. The next DEA TakeBack Day will be on a date TBD in April.
- **Red Ribbon Week** (Oct 28-November 1) led by **HBW Peer Leaders** creating theme days to reinforce the national theme of "Life is a Movie, Film Drug Free". Door decorating challenge was an extremely successful way to focus students on theme. Funding for the support items from the Township Opioid Settlement grants. Members of the Verona Police Department visited the HBW lunch periods one day. The Peers also led the food & toy drives at HBW.
- **Fair in the Square** – (December 7) Thanked VMAC members and members of VHS honor society and OLL confirmation class for volunteering at the table. Youth involvement is so important as peer-to-peer messaging is key to our mission.
- **Heroes & Cool Kids** – 80 VHS student athletes serving as mentors (Heroes) for approximately 160 HBW 5th graders (Cool Kids). Trained 11/14 and visited HBW 11/22 with a lesson on physical activity as alternative to destructive behavior. Lessons include issues of peer pressure, ATOD use and abuse, and anti-bullying. The cost of this program has increased by another \$500 to \$5,500. VMAC grandfathered to FY24 rate of \$5,000, but will need to incorporate increase for FY26.

FY25 PLAN BUDGET REALLOCATION/MODIFIATION

At the October meeting, members agreed to issue a request for proposal for reallocation of the funding from VHS Peer Leaders program which was discontinued for this year by VHS administration. Funding reallocation totals \$3,807. RFP was issued via email to community stakeholders on October 31 with a deadline for submissions in December.

- **BABES (Beginning Awareness Basic Education Studies)** necessary funding for additional group due to increased class size.
- **Peer Mediation at Elementary Schools:** requested funding for program supplies
- **Meditation & Art at the Library:** requested funding for 12 classes for teens and adults.

BABES additional session \$ 500

Peer Mediation supplies \$ 900

Meditation & Art classes \$2,400

TOTAL REALLOCATION \$3,800

Project Graduation \$7+ balance of VHS Peers or other programs

Chairwoman Manis called for a motion to vote on the proposed modification. Jim Day called for the vote and the motion was seconded by Diane DiGiuseppe. The motion was unanimously approved. Coordinator Ann Jocelyn will submit modification to the County for approval.

OTHER BUSINESS

VMAC information has been migrated to the Township website at www.VeronaNJ.org/VMAC.

Members will support the Township and Schools in organizing speaking engagements by Chris Herren (www.herrentalks.com) on April 3rd.

It was confirmed that VHS addresses NARCAN as part of the junior-year health curriculum.

A new class of cannabis business, consumption lounges, was discussed and it was confirmed that Verona’s Ordinance No. 2021-15 was sufficient to continue to prohibit any business related to cannabis from operating in Verona. Coordinator Jocelyn reiterated that the role of VMAC is to educate the public, not to advocate for a position or policy.

VMAC Officers will be appointed, or reappointed, at April 22, 2025 Annual Meeting. Anyone interested in consideration for the role of Chair, Vice-Chair, or Secretary should contact Ann Jocelyn with a copy of their resume for consideration by the Committee. The Grant Coordinator, appointed by the Township Council, serves as Treasurer for VMAC.

Terms scheduled to expire on June 30, will have a possible extension due to the rescheduling of Municipal elections to November. Members are appointed by the Council to a three-year term.

Coordinator Jocelyn informed Members that the Letter of Intent for FY26 from GCSUD has been delayed, but it is anticipated that the grant and the plan will remain relatively unchanged from FY2025. Once received, a plan will be submitted to the Members for review and approval prior to submission to the Council.

Chairwoman Manis called for public comment. There being no public comment or additional business to address, the Chairwoman adjourned the meeting at 8:01 PM.

APPROVED: April 22, 2025

ROLL CALL VOTE:

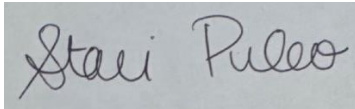
AYES: Cuartas, DiGiuseppe, Holland, Jocelyn, Kirby-Pinto, Klansky, Manis, Moy, Puleo, Schmidt, Tully

NAYS:

ABSENT: Boyle, Day, O'Sullivan

ABSTAIN: Mikhael

Respectfully submitted,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Staci Puleo".

Staci Puleo, secretary