

November 4, 2024

A special meeting of the Town Board of Vernon was held at 6:30 p.m. on the above date at the Town Office Building for the purpose of a public hearing to consider the advisability of entering into contracts for providing fire protection services with the following fire companies with respect to the following fire protection districts:

- Oneida Castle Fire Department
  - District #1 \$28,567.00
  - District #2 \$59,917.00
- Sherrill-Kenwood Volunteer Fire Company \$51,053.00
- Volunteer Fire Company of Vernon \$111,255.00
- Vernon Center Volunteer Fire Company \$110,614.00

Council members present: Randy Watson, Supervisor; Gene Bennati, Myron Thurston, Steve Adamkowski and John Peters. Also present: 14 community members. The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Watson at 6:30 p.m.

Supervisor Watson explained that there was an increase of approximately \$45,000 that was divided amongst the 4 fire districts.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

A special meeting of the Town Board of Vernon was held at 6:45 p.m. on the above date at the Town Office Building for the purpose of a 2025 Preliminary Budget Hearing. Council members present: Randy Watson, Supervisor; Gene Bennati, Myron Thurston, Steve Adamkowski and John Peters. Also present: 14 community members. The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Watson at 6:45 p.m.

The proposed salaries of the following Town offices are hereby specified as follows:

	Supervisor	\$25,000.00
	Deputy Supervisor	\$4,700.00
4	Council Person(each)	\$10,000.00
	Town Clerk/Tax Collector	\$47,944.00
1	Justice	\$24,000.00
	Assessor-Certified Chairman	\$23,000.00
1	Assessor-Certified	\$22,300.00
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	Highway Superintendent	\$73,200.00

Kaylee Sierson asked if the \$120,000.00 under “Parks” was going to be distributed. Watson advised that amount was for the park here at the Town behind the office building. Sierson asked if there were funds available for any of the other parks, such as the Village Park. Watson stated that there is \$20,000 for the other parks. However, that has not been decided yet on how it will be distributed. Sierson asked if they were still putting money aside for the CAC in 2025. Watson advised that they just issued reimbursement checks for materials such as pads for bowling and refrigeration units. The amount designated was up to \$15,000.00 and the town has paid \$13,300.00 so far. By the Town providing this funding, it allows all Town of Vernon residents to use the CAC at a reduced rate.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Town Board of Vernon was held at 7:00 p.m. on the above date at the Town Office Building. Council members present: Randy Watson, Supervisor; Gene Bennati, Myron Thurston, Steve Adamkowski and John Peters. Also present: 14 residents.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, there was a moment of silence. The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Watson at 7:00 p.m.

Supervisor Watson asked the council members if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the October 15, 2024 meeting. There being none, a motion to approve the minutes as written was made by Thurston, seconded by Peters. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

#### PUBLIC CONCERNS:

Cole Wimmer (Field Maintenance), Joe Clausen (President) and Jenny Conniff (Softball) were present from the little league. They are asking for support from the town as they are looking to make improvements to Bartholomew Park in the Village of Vernon as it has deteriorated over the years. The group has several members that are helping with this. The group would like to address some drainage issues in the park along with doing some work to the bathrooms, concession stand and storage facilities. They are working on obtaining some grant money. Supervisor Watson asked the group to bring in plans and what it is going to cost for them to review.

#### REPORTS:

The following reports were presented: Town Clerk, Codes Enforcement, Supervisor, Education and Libraries; Bennati said that all the years he has served on the Education and Libraries Committee, it has been a pleasure. The last few years have been like a nightmare with the board being told that they must bond for almost \$400,000.00 for the library that Oneida built, then fast forward to someone in government in the City of Sherrill declaring that we didn't need libraries anymore as we have the internet, so they stopped funding the Sherrill Library. And now the Vernon Library proposition to add \$60,000 to the town taxes. What Bennati said next is speaking from himself and not his fellow board members. Bennati questioned Kaylee Sierson, Vernon Library President, that at the last meeting she stated the library was not going to be a facility for the chamber of commerce. Sierson stated that the statement was correct. Bennati asked if that meant there might be an office in the Library for the Chamber of Commerce. Sierson stated that there is not an office and there will not be an office used for the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce already has an office at a different location. Bennati advised that the board has always based the library funding on performance after being given reports and information on minutes, events, dollar amounts and activities. If the vote passes, then the town has no way to measure performance. The board will have to hope the performance and use of the money is good. Bennati does not know if the town can ask for documents that were previously provided. He hopes that whatever the library does works out well. Bennati asked where they were at now with planning and discussions for the library. Sierson says that is really hard to say as they don't know the direction with the funding. If the vote is to pass, the library would like to have extra librarians lined up, hours to be open 45-60 hours a week and a Notary on site. They have several programs coming and have seen a huge attendance increase. She also stated that if the board would like to see the reports in the future, she will certainly keep them coming to the board should the vote pass. If it does not pass, Sierson is unable to speak without the Board being present, however they have several options for the building and will handle it in a way that the community would best be served. Bennati asked if the building was left in a trust fund. Sierson said she believes the building was gifted and the funding was in a trust fund. Bennati believes that the trust fund was depleted during the time of COVID. He has spent his whole career in education, so he certainly is in favor of libraries and that they are a beehive of activities in the communities. He wishes them well in their endeavors. Sierson said she was unable to speak on the trust fund money during COVID as she was not active with the library at that time. From what she has seen in the accounts from 2013 through current is roughly \$22,000 spent each year. Without knowing all the information, saying they did spend \$22,000 does not seem like an unrealistic budget other than the fact that they were not open x number of hours. She was not on that board and didn't know how much fundraising was done or how much effort was put in. She does know that the hours were reduced as she had trouble getting in with her own children. The current board is brand new and very dedicated to the community. Bennati hopes they do well. Intergovernmental Relations: Adamkowski mentioned that they had a successful tree planting morning, thanks to the highway department. The park is really starting to take shape, and the gazebo comes next week. He is looking forward to that. Leana Finster added that she uses the walking path and there is a large amount of community members from all over that are using the trail. Adamkowski said they are looking to draw people in which is good for local businesses. He thanks the community for the support along with the board for putting extra money into the budget. Adamkowski is looking forward to it growing. Thurston advised people to take a walk out there if they have not done so yet as it is a very enjoyable place to walk. Highway Superintendent Murphy said they are doing their final brush and roadside mowing. Trucks are ready for the winter. Planning to install some of the old garage doors that were on the front of the building, at the back of the building. County

Legislator Keith Schiebel issued a written report and highlighted Tornado relief funding, Sherriff Road patrol vehicles, cannabis local laws and 2025 County Budget highlights along with the Budget meeting schedule. Schiebel encouraged board members to attend. Elections are underway and early voting has just wrapped up with somewhere around 27,000 voters in Oneida County. Paulette Schiebel has served the Board of Elections in the Whitetown area and only a few hiccups reported with all being human caused. All equipment ran well. After Town Hall Community Forum was held in October there were several people that wanted to hear from the Sherriff again. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> from 6:00pm until 8:30pm at “The Spot” 5571 State Route 5, Vernon.

There were no reports from Planning Board/Zoning Board of Appeals, Assessors, Operations, SWOCO and Economic Development.

A motion to accept the above reports was made by Bennati, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to pay the bills was made by Adamkowski, seconded by Peters. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

#### BUSINESS:

A motion to approve the 2025 Fire Contracts was made by Bennati, seconded Thurston. No Discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve the 2025 Budget was made by Bennati, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Town received the NYS Water Infrastructure Improvement Grant (WIIA) award of \$2,191,991 for Vernon Center Water District.

A motion to approve Supervisor Watson to sign for acceptance of WIIA Grant Award was made by Peters, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to schedule a Public Hearing on the increase cost to water district and authorizing and establishing user regulations to be held December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 6:45pm was made by Peters, seconded by Bennati. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve resolution to accept standardized materials set by City of Oneida Water Department for Vernon Center Water District was made by Thurston, seconded by Bennati. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve Supervisor Watson and Highway Superintendent Murphy to sign 1 year snow plowing agreement with Village of Vernon for \$20,000 when received from the Village was made by Adamkowski, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Motion carried.

A motion to approve NYS DOT renewal of Shared Service Agreement for 4 years with the town was made by Peters, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Received DASNY Grant check in the amount of \$50,000.

Supervisor Watson opened the discussion on the NYCLASS Program that Town Clerk Jennifer Champney proposed last month. Champney asked board members if they had received the email that was sent out. She explained that it was an investment opportunity that she was looking to use with the Tax Collector account that could earn around 5% interest. Last year the Tax Collector account earned \$85.92 from Community Bank. Town of Verona made around \$10,000 last year with NYCLASS (New York Cooperative Liquid Assets Security Systems). Currently Oneida County, Madison-Oneida BOCES, City of Rome, Trenton Fire District, Adirondack, Sherrill City School District, Village of Clinton, Holland Patent, Camden, Boonville and Deerfield, along with others use it. She advised that it was up to the board members if they wanted her to give it a try and if not, that is perfectly okay. Bennati asked if Champney had looked into how much could be earned? Champney advised that she brings in around the same amount of money that the Town of Verona does with around a \$4 million tax warrant. Therefore, it should be around the amount they brought in depending on how comfortable Champney

gets with moving the money. Watson does not like the idea of using Oneida County tax money and putting it on a separate account as he feels they should be getting the interest and not the Town. Champney stated that she had asked NYCLASS that question and was advised as long as there is not a contract stating the interest has to be given to Oneida County then the Town can keep the interest. Adamkoswki asked how often tax money was sent to Oneida County. Champney stated that it is sent every month. Thurston believed that Oneida County was paid the total amount in the account at the end of the month. Champney explained that she pays them in \$500,000.00 increments with the last payment being the remaining amount. Watson stated that the rules and laws state that the Tax Collector has to zero out the account at the end of each month. Champney said she would like to see the law he was referring to as she has never seen that. Champney wants to make sure to follow all rules and laws and not break them. Champney said that the Town has always kept the interest on the Tax Collector account. Adamkowski asked if Champney could get more clarity on this all before they approve the resolution. Champney stated that she does not want to continue with discussions any longer at this point as it is getting close to tax season and things are going to be getting busy in the office. Bennati stated he was in favor. Thurston stated he did not know that much about it, so he was not in favor. Watson said no. Adamkowski said no until he had more clarity about the Town holding the money. He is willing to revisit it again so he can make a better educated decision. Peters also wanted to table the decision for a month. Champney did not want to hold off any longer to sign up this year and advised that we could look into it next year. She also stated that she was okay with their decision. Bennati asked if NYCLASS was protected by the FDIC. Champney was unsure. Thurston said he knows the comptroller office is specific on where and how funds are transferred, and he would like approval from Association of Towns letting us know this is a good investment firm.

Watson opened a discussion on the See My Legacy program that was proposed to himself and Councilperson Thurston. He asked Thurston to explain the program. He explained that there would be a QR Code on the plaques out back and in the memorial out front that would then give you information about the named person. Such as their accomplishments, when and where they served etc. He feels that this would be unique. As they progress forward with the park out back and the town memorial they would like to do something a little more interactive for people when they come. Watson thinks it is a neat idea.

Town of Vernon will hold Veterans Memorial Service on 11/11/24 at 11:00 am.

#### GOOD OF THE ORDER:

Myron was happy that they passed the budget. He has proposed a pickleball court and will be looking into grants. Thurston is looking to eventually hold a public meeting to see if there is more interest in pickleball from the community. Bennati added that if they put the courts in, the people will come.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn at 8:12 p.m. was made by Thurston, seconded by Peters. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Additions to minutes on file  
in Town Clerk's Office.

Jennifer Champney  
Town Clerk

This meeting was digitally recorded and is on file in the Town Clerk's office.

#### COMMUNICATIONS:

None