

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE
VERNON TOWN COUCIL
April 24, 2007**

Center 375 Gymnasium, 375 Hartford Turnpike (Route 30), Vernon, Connecticut

Mayor Ellen L. Marmer, M.D. called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL:

The Clerk called the roll as follows:

Present: Council Members Daniel E. Anderson, George F. Apel, Bill F. Campbell, Daniel A. Champagne, Bill Fox, Marie A. Herbst, Brian R. Motola, Pauline A. Schaefer, Connie Simon; 9.

Absent: Council Members Mark S. Etre, Jason L. McCoy, Mary A. Oliver; 3.

Entered During Meeting: Council Members Jason L. McCoy (7:03 p.m.), Mary A. Oliver (7:08 p.m.); 2.

Also Present: Mayor Ellen L. Marmer, M.D., Christopher Clark Town Administrator, Finance Officer James Luddecke, Budget Analyst Diane Luddecke, Bernice K. Dixon Town Clerk and Recording Secretary Karin Z. Pike.

Council Member McCoy entered the meeting (7:03 p.m.).

There were approximately 54 citizens present at the Annual Town Meeting, exclusive of those listed above.

Town Clerk Bernice K. Dixon read into the record the legal notice of the Annual Town Meeting and certified that the notice was posted on the bulletin board of the Town Hall on April 14, 2007 and published in the Journal Inquirer on April 16, 2007.

(A copy of the legal notice is appended to these minutes and marked as "Appendix A.")

Council Member Oliver entered the meeting (7:08 p.m.)

ELECTION OF THE MODERATOR

Mayor Marmer called for nominations for a moderator to preside over the Annual Town Meeting.

Citizen Tom Didio, seconded by Council Member Herbst, moved TO NOMINATE FINANCE OFFICER JAMES LUDDECKE AS MODERATOR. There being no other nominees, the nomination was approved by a unanimous vote.

The Moderator explained the requirements necessary to speak at the Annual Town Meeting as to residency, age, and ownership of property, and reported that the Budget would be going to Referendum, and that tonight's meeting would be strictly for comments on the proposed budget and that the actual vote would be taken Tuesday, May 1, 2007 at Center 375, 375 Hartford Turnpike (Route 30), Vernon, Connecticut.

"SHALL THE TOWN OF VERNON ADOPT A BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$74,736,512. FOR A PERIOD COMMENCING JULY 1, 2007 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2008?"

Mayor Marmer stated that the updated budget was available at the library, Senior Center and online. She also stated that the revaluation was a separate issue than the budget and that it would be discussed at the next regular Town Council meeting on May 1, 2007.

The Moderator then asked if there was anyone present who wished to comment on the proposed budget.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Peggy Shay, 27 Fox Hill Drive, spoke in favor of NOT cutting the budget any further and how the cuts would affect the community.

Frank Rothammer, 13 Spruce Street, spoke regarding Board of Education salary increases, per pupil expenditures and the special needs fund. Interim Superintendent Richard Paskewitz was present to answer questions.

Mr. Rothammer also questioned the revaluation and questioned how the Town and Board of Education budgets could be voted on separately.

William Smith, 30 Vernwood Drive, spoke regarding the revaluation and would like to see it phased in.

Tom Didio, 112 Box Mountain Drive, opposed to any further cuts to the budget. He also spoke in favor of the transportation center and stated the he was disappointed the Council did not approve the YMCA. He also stated the Seniors were not the only ones in Town but that all groups needed services and that we should "look to the future".

Betty Fielding, 34 Tankerhoosen Road, felt that the revaluation was very disappointing and questioned how the assessment is calculated.

Arthur Holmes, 82 Hillside Avenue, felt the Mil rate decrease is a "sham" and he questioned the health, welfare and retirement cost per Town employee.

James Hoover, 155 Trout Stream, stated that the budget was "unreasonable" and suggested that the Council take the referendum seriously and not to give the Townspeople the "idiot" treatment.

Michael Tobin, 424 Tunnel Road, felt that he has gotten his "money's worth" from the Town. Mr. Tobin spoke in favor of the budget and praised various Town departments including Public Works "one of the best in the State" and the Police Department.

Alan Sauer, 4 Grant Street, felt that Town employees were dedicated and stated that a 6% increase in the budget was too high.

Joe Grabinski, 623 Dart Hill Road, spoke against the Board of Education budget and felt that the Board does "not tell the truth". He felt that adjustments need to be made to the Education budget, including the use of permanent substitutes, and that the Town was not getting their "money's worth". He also spoke against AP courses at the High School and felt that Seniors should go to MCC to get their college courses and have them transferred back to the High School. He also feels that increases in Board salaries and benefits were too high.

James Krupienski, 59 Deerfield Avenue, spoke in favor of Town services and agreed with the revaluation assessment.

Bill Daughlin, 11 Olive Lane, spoke in favor of the budget.

Deborah Halprin, 59 Rainbow Trail, spoke in favor of the budget and stated that you "get what you pay for" and that we can't afford to "lose" the Town.

Mary Oliver, 15 Dobson Commons Circle, spoke in favor of life in Vernon and stated that Government costs money and education is an investment.

Jason McCoy, 216 Skinner Road, stated that the budget is "not perfect" and that the Board of Education budget was not understood. He stated that taxes have been increased by approximately 12 million dollars over the last few years and that the citizens have been overtaxed by approximately 3 million dollars. He stated that some of the cuts made by the Council are intended to be covered by General fund dollars. Mr. McCoy also felt that the budget hearings should have been televised and that it was good that the public showed up for the Town meeting and gave the Council an education as to how they feel. He also stated that the Bonding issue has not even begun to take affect concerning the Town's taxes. He encouraged all to come and vote at Tuesday's referendum.

Daniel Champagne, 725 Hartford Turnpike, spoke in favor of "phasing in" the revaluation.

Steve Taylor, 172 Merline Road, spoke in favor of the budget.

Marie Herbst, 245 Brandy Hill Road, stated the Mayor had asked for no more than a 1% increase in budgets with the exception of those things that were not controllable. She felt that the State of Connecticut has to restructure the tax code and felt that it was very difficult to make a Town budget when the Town doesn't know what they will be getting for funding from the State and Federal levels until later on.

The Moderator then asked if anyone else wished to speak.

No other citizens wished to speak and the Public Forum was closed.

ADJOURN:

Council Member Fox, seconded by Council Member Schaefer, moved TO ADJOURN.

The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Received: April 26, 2007
Approved: May 1, 2007
Vernon Town Council

Karin Z. Pike
Asst Town Clerk/Recording Secretary

Appendix A