

April 1, 2021
Town of Vernon Council Meeting
Location: Vernon Gym

The meeting began at 7:00 PM with the following Town Officials and employees present:

Mayor:	Dan Wright
Ward 1 Council:	Eric Genda
Ward 2 Council:	Jeff Walker
Ward 3 Council:	Shelly Davers
Clerk/Treasurer:	Amber Fields
Maintenance/Water Works:	Ron Hendershot
Town Attorney:	Brad Kage

Public Comments:

Roger Taylor – Vernon Alumni Association – Annual Alumni Meeting planned for May 1st from 9a-6p – Alumni would like permission from Council to utilize the Vernon Gym for their planned meeting. Council vote to allow Alumni to have planned meeting on May 1st – 3 yes votes. Maintenance request from Roger for the front entrance – prior to the May 1st Alumni meeting – Handrail on front steps needs secured.

Cabinet in the Vernon Alumni room belongs to Town of Vernon – is it still in the room? Ron confirmed that it is still in the Alumni room.

Keys for Alumni room – Roger Taylor and Dixie have keys. Carol Layman has key to exterior door.

Roger Taylor – Vernon Township Trustee – Update on new Fire station – plan to have an open house sometime in May. Background information given by Roger: Building belongs to the Fire Department; the Township pays the Vernon Fire Department monthly; Contracted with Township and then to town of Vernon for fire protection. If fire department is closed – the assets go to the Township.

John Lightener asked what the time frame was for reopening the Gym. Dan Wright responded that we were still reviewing policies and hoped to have those finished by the May meeting. He asked if there was anything he could do to help the Council speed up the process. Dan responded no but appreciated his offer. John runs a church league and also plays a few times per week with other groups. Shelly asked John to send her more specific information regarding his church league and pick-up game routine prior to shut down. John states that he had purchased cleaning supplies with his own money and would clean up routinely for Danny Stark. He also said he had keys to the gym and the storage closet.

Damon Davers asked if any collections from the gym fees had been pursued or collected. He asked if a collection letter to the Steps Dance Studio and Karate Class had been sent. Brad Kage said he would send letters once the amounts had been determined. Shelly said she would forward all the info on outstanding rent and contact information to Brad. John Lightner added that he had left the gym open for people and collected money in the past/would come back later and lock the gym up. John added that has seen Dakota Miller pay Danny in cash for his rent of the Karate studio.

Nick Trulock - Vernon Fire Department recommended a keypad with passwords for the gym usage as a solution to the number of keys out in the community. John Lightner offered to help with the cost of a new system or process.

Anna Walker asked if the streets would be closed during the Our Heritage Sassafras Festival on the 24th and 25th of April. Dan said that the Town had always approved the street closings for the Festival but had not yet brought that to the Council. The request was for the closing of Pike Street between Brown Street and Ripley Street during the hours of the Festival (6:00 am to 6:00 pm). The request also included the use of the "Rat Row" property. Dan also mentioned that the "Night Fire" and the Baseball game (3:00 pm) are going to be held at the Muscatatuck County Park this year. Susan Harding asked if there would be an admission to the park for the Baseball game and Night Fire. Dan said "No".

Jeff Walker made a motion to close the Streets for the Sassafras Festival on the 24th and 25th of April. Shelly Davers made the Second. **3 Yes votes, 0 No votes (attach letter from Dan Wright with street closure request to meeting minutes)**

Damon Davers asked for a map to show where Water Street starts because he wants to build a shelter on his property. Dan Wright will get him a copy. He also noted that the Vernon Charter is posted on Facebook and is not applicable to current needs specific to the requirements of running for office and voting. Damon thought that there should be a disclaimer on the posting. Dan said that the Vernon Charter was approved by the Indiana State Legislature in 1851. John Post added that the state legislature changed the original Vernon Charter in 1851. Damon also asked when the Town Ordinances would be posted online with noting that documents like the DNR Trail Grant letter are able to be posted immediately while the Ordinances page has been under maintenance for quite a long time. Dan Wright advised that updates flow through the Clerk/Treasurer.

Damon Davers also asked about the Water Tracker on the Water and Sewer Bills. Dan explained that the Tracker was put in place so that the Town would not have to raise Water and Sewer rates every time North Vernon Water raised their rates. Damon asked about the revenue from the Tracker and was that separated from the regular revenue from the water and sewer. He asked what is done with the money that comes in from the Tracker, and how much money comes in from the Tracker. He feels like residents are being overcharged and thinks the

bills are incorrect. The calculation methods were not known by members present and will need looked into.

Billie Gryphon asked if the streets might be swept before the festivals. Dan mentioned that the City of North Vernon had swept the streets in the past for no charge. He said that he would contact them about sweeping the streets again.

Billie also asked there was a plan for the abandoned cars in the Town, specifically the car in front of Sarah Bentz house parked too far from the curb with flat tires. Dan Wright will talk to Sarah about her car.

Updates:

Community Foundation Town of Vernon Improvement Fund

Dan Wright gave an update on the Community Foundation Town of Vernon Improvement Fund, set up previously by Benny Barber. The 2021 Grant Payout for 2021 is \$664.98 which can be used for something in town like "Playground Funding." The Fair Market Value as of January 1, 2021 is \$12,634.62. Dan asked for a motion to take the disbursement or roll the disbursement back into the fund balance. Shelly Davers made a motion to roll the disbursement back into the fund balance and Eric Genda made the second, **3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.**

Trail Grant

Dan Wright gave an update on the Trail Grant. He mentioned that the Grant would be \$1.08M+, and would not be a reimbursable grant, but that the money would come to the Town up front, in sections. He said that the contracts would be out over the next couple of weeks as drafts. Nathaniel Simmons would be the Project Coordinator. He also said that there were not any new proposals needed. The following groups have offered to Match the Grant in the following amounts:

Jennings County Government:	\$100,000
Jennings County Parks & Recreation:	\$150,000
Jennings County Community Foundation:	\$5,000

Dan attended an organizational meeting on the Trail Grant and mentioned that as the bids came in, it might be necessary to cut portions of the project due to the dramatic increase in the cost of materials. The Trail would be the number 1 priority, restrooms and Overlook and other portions of the project would have to be prioritized and cut accordingly.

Vernon Day of Caring

Dan gave an update on the Vernon Day of Caring scheduled on April 17, 2021. The Kiwanis Club would be at the Vernon Gym to work on the wooden playground structure and the Jennings County Young Professionals would be coordinating with the Friends of Historic Vernon for a "Clean up" of the Town. The Town will be providing a dumpster at the Gym for locals to put trash items in. The project will start at 9:00 am on Saturday the 17th.

Vernon Lollygag and Labyrinth Walk

Dan gave an update on the Vernon Lollygag and Labyrinth Walk scheduled on Saturday, May 1, 2021. There will be no charge for the event with the following programs scheduled:

Coffee & Donuts (JC Historical Society)	9:00 am
History & Architectural Tour	10:00 am
Nature Walk (meet at the Vernon Cemetery)	11:30 am
Guided Labyrinth Walk (Vernon Commons)	12:30 pm
Perceptions Art Gallery Open	10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Street Cleaning in Vernon

Dan Wright would like to have streets cleaned prior to the Sassafras Festival. He will contact Mayor in North Vernon – they have done this for free in the past. Streets to be cleaned include: Brown Street from the highway to the Commons, Pike Street from highway to Ripley Street, Perry Street from Brown Street to highway and Montgomery Street from highway to Gaines Street.

2021 American Rescue Plan

Dan Wright talked about the funds the Town would receive from the 2021 American Rescue Plan. The Town of Vernon should expect to receive approximately \$67,500. Dan said the priority for the funds would be for roads and streets. Specifically, for paving Pike street between Brown and Ripley through the Tunnel and Ripley Street from the Railroad tracks to the Tunnel. He also mentioned a 25% match from CCMG (round 2) to bring the total to \$50,000 total from streets fund and covid money for up to \$100,000 of paving: Pike Street from Brown to Ripley; Ripley through the tunnel; Ripley from the highway to Pike Street/hillside through railroad tracks.

2020 Cares Act Funding

Shelly Davers asked if all the Cares Act funding reimbursement had been received as requested. Amber Said that she would check and report at the next Town meeting in May.

OCRA Grant

Shelly Davers asked about using available grant funding for wastewater and drinking water. Hopefully, we could apply for this grant to use for our infrastructure upgrades.

Water Rate Study Discussion

Last study 2013 – current water rate study is a DRAFT. Shelly has several questions:

Remove automatic flush hydrants expense ~\$20,000 annual reserve of \$1,333 over 15 years – See Adjustment 5, page 7.

Meter reading system added as an expected cost when we have already stated to the public that this system would not increase rates. Should be removed from a “rate” study - See Adjustment 5, page 7.

Meter reading system has “expected life” of 10 years, but the system we approved was supposed to have an expected life of 20 years. Expected life and Annual Reserve need amended to show this. See Adjustment 5, page 7. Previous conversation with Ron Hendershot - he stated that he discussed this with Sherman, Barber & Mullican and this adjustment would **change the increase from \$2.89 to \$2.25** per first 3,333 gallons.

Short Lived Assets and Office Equipment & Software needs to include more specific detail. It currently looks as if we have duplicated an Expected Cost. Ron will provide specific annual cost for Pub Works software/equipment for this report. GIS contract with Town for link to Pub Works – discussed at March meeting. Shelly requested to review the contract, but has not been given a copy yet. Are there costs associated with this contract? If so, those need to be specified in the rate study/Pub Works information.

Shelly also asked where the numbers for salaries and wages, Bond and Insurance expense came from. In 2020, the insurance total was \$12,999 (paid from 4 different funds) and According to Quickbooks – insurance cost to Water Fund was \$3,259.69 for 2020. Ron said that information came from the 2020 Annual Report submitted on Gateway. Salary and Wages should be closer to \$22,400 for the year with the increase in Ron’s pay and taking 1/4 Council/Mayor salaries from the Water Fund.

Shelly asked for Water Bond details – interest rate, payments, etc. Has asked multiple times of previous Clerk Treasurer and never given the information.

Last Water Rate study allowed for water meter replacements over a 3 year period. It appears this was never done. What happened to the funds that weren’t used? The Town raised rates and then didn’t follow through. Want to make sure that we don’t do this again.

Water Trackers are not listed as a source of revenue, but the Town collects fees for each resident billed. **This should be included in the rate study and clearly noted on a separate line as an offset for unpredictable rate increases from North Vernon.** The water tracker is used to compensate for rate increases from North Vernon. Shelly asked when last rate increase took place – no answer was given. If there were no rate increases, then we should have a cushion in the water fund. The current Ordinance does not specify how the water/wastewater tracker is billed to the customer. The Trackers are currently separate line charges on the bill. The current Ordinance states that the tracker fee is included. Is there an issue with the way our bills are being calculated? Clarification needed to update Ordinance.

Operating Account page 11 of Draft – Hydrant Rentals based on 13 hydrants. Needs corrected to 17 hydrants.

If an increase in water rate is suggested – could the increased rate be broken down to show what percentage should be allocated to each category? This would allow for us to better manage our incoming revenue and save accordingly for future expenses.

Ron Hendershot - Water Tower needs to be agitated occasionally and holds approximately 50,000 gallons of water. The Town uses approximately 20,000 gallons of water per day.

Old Business:

Town Policies reviewed to be voted on with the highlighted corrections:

- 2019.1 Credit Card and Line of Credit
- 2019.2 Oversight and Segregation of Duties for Clerk Treasurer
- 2019.3 Internal Control Training Certification
- 2020.1 Sexual Harassment and Abuse Training
- 2020.2 Deadly and Non-Deadly Force
- 2020.3 Emergency Repair Spending Limit

Gym Policy (Tabled)

Shelly Davers made the motion to accept the revised policies and Eric Genda made the Second, **3 Yes votes, 0 No votes**

Oversight of three areas were determined:

Three Oversight positions need to be filled by Council members. Shelly is no longer Oversight and Segregation Appointee as of today per our policy. Shelly needs to assist Amber with reconciling accounts – cannot do data entry/reconciling if in position of Oversight/Segregation.

Oversight and Segregation of Clerk Treasurer	Jeff Walker
Maintenance and Water/Sewer Works employee	Eric Genda
Vernon Gym and employee	Shelly Davers

Shelly made the motion to approve the Oversight positions and return in 3 months to review the appointments (July meeting) and Jeff Walker made the Second, **3 Yes votes and 0 No votes**

May 6th at 6:30pm – Council needs to come early for annual training from Jessica/Shepherd Insurance.

Shelly Davers:

Shelly asked if the prior Council members had turned in their keys to the Town office. John Post was in the audience and said that he had turned in his keys. It was determined that Danny Stark had not turned his keys in yet and that Dan Wright would collect those from him.

Jeff Walker:

Jeff explained to the Council and those present, that he had come across a grant from AARP for a Community Challenge. The application could come from the Town of Vernon or the Friends of Historic Vernon. The Grant is due on April 14, 2021. Dan recommended that the Grant proposal be submitted as The Friends of Historic Vernon and should outline a proposal to repair the front entrance to the Vernon Gym with ADA compliance included.

Shelly made a motion to allow Dan Wright to sign the grant application to AARP as chief executive of the Town of Vernon. Jeff Walker made the Second, **3 Yes votes and 0 No votes**

Eric Genda:

Eric asked if there was a 911 address for the Soccer Building. Eric also addressed the commotion and property destruction that continues at the School Bus pick-up in front of the Post Office.

Amber Fields:

Amber explained to the Council that she had contacted the Indiana State Board of Accounts and that they did not include Quickbooks Online as a program they would recommend (it is not made for fund accounting) or support. Discussion on why the Town of Vernon chose Quickbooks – due to previous Clerk Treasurer’s reluctance to use the Boyce Keystone system for fund accounting. She asked if the Council would approve the Boyce Keystone Program for \$5,300 initial cost and future Annual Maintenance fees \$1,520. Can have as many users as we want. Plan to start using July 1st. Shelly and Amber will work together to get Quickbooks updated.

Eric Genda made the motion to purchase the Boyce Keystone Program, Jeff Walker made the Second, **3 Yes Votes and 0 No votes**

Amber reported that a formal complaint to the State had been submitted and requested access to the “signed” meeting minutes. Amber is working on getting the meeting minutes online.

Ron Hendershot:

Ron told the Council that he went up on the Soccer Building Roof and put over a gallon of Roof patch. He thought the roof would need replaced soon. Shelly mentioned the lease with Muscatatuck Soccer Club – the Town is NOT responsible for maintenance to the building. Brad said that he would check. He is still working on the “recording” process for the lease. Discussion about the “address” of the Storage building leased to Muscatatuck Soccer Club. Brad will contact APC to have the address for the Gym and Storage building separated into 2 distinct locations. Currently, both buildings are listed under one address.

Ron also asked about an adjustment policy on Water and Sewer bills. Shelly thought that Ordinance 152 covered that issue. In addition, Ron said that the current \$50 deposit for Water

and Sewer would not cover even a month's bill and that the Council might want to consider changing that amount.

Ron and Dan talked about the collection of lead information in the water system was the result of what is called the "Flint Rule" after the situation in Flint, Michigan. Ron will be attending a conference next week for this information update.

Claims

Shelly made a comment that the Gas bill for the Vernon Gym for the month of February seemed high. Amber said that she would check the prior months usage and see if there might be a leak. Ron made the comment that the Gym was heated with only one ceiling heater and that it was hard for the heater to keep up and cover the entire gym and he set it at 54 degrees to protect the new floor.

Shelly also questioned the bill for moving mulch - \$400.

Shelly suggested starting a phone tree for the Town to reach out to residents that would volunteer to help in emergent situations. Tabled for future discussion.

Shelly Davers made the motion to accept the Claims as presented, Eric Genda made the Second, **3 Yes votes, 0 No votes**

Meeting Minutes

Approval of meeting minutes – January – Shelly made a motion to approve January minutes "as to form" (since previous council members are no longer in office). Second by Jeff Walker

March Minutes approved with correction to "Ward 1 and 3" on first page.

3 Yes votes, 0 No votes

Jeff Walker made a motion to Adjourn, Shelly Davers made the Second, **3 Yes votes, 0 No votes**

The meeting ended at: 9.25 pm

Note:

Jessica with Shepherd Insurance training has been moved to the May 6th meeting at 6:30pm.


Ron has invited representatives from Utility Supply Company regarding the water meter system and new pricing to the May 6th meeting.

The next Executive Session will be held at 7:00 pm on Thursday, April 29th, 2021

The next Vernon Town meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on May 6, 2021

Both meetings will be held at the Vernon Gym at 29 Washington Street, Vernon, Indiana.

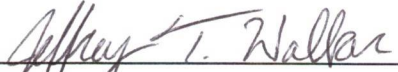
Vernon Town Council



Shelly Davers

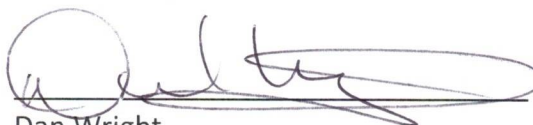


Eric Genda



Jeff Walker

Vernon Mayor



Dan Wright



Amber Fields, Clerk Treasurer