



VERONA MUNICIPAL ALLIANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

7:00 P.M.

April 22, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: With a quorum of members in attendance, year-to-date expenditures totaling \$10,882.56 in support of various programs and initiatives were reviewed. Members reviewed the fiscal year 2026 plan as submitted to Essex County for approval. Members reappointed Kimberly Manis as Chair for fiscal year 2026, elected to not fill the position of vice-chair, and approved Ms. Manis and Coordinator Jocelyn as interim co-Secretary. Meeting dates for July 2025-June 2026 were also discussed.

CALL TO ORDER- meeting called to order at 7:00 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

Prior to Roll Call, Chairwoman Manis welcomed Verena Mikhael who, at a regular meeting of the Township Council held on April 21, 2025, was appointed as a new member of the Municipal Alliance Committee to the unexpired term ending 12/31/25. Verena represents the community at large with an attention to the needs of young adults.

Members in attendance: Katie Cuartas (Laning Representative), Diane DiGiuseppe (Superintendent-Verona Public Schools), Councilwoman Cynthia Holland (Verona Town Council), Ann Jocelyn (Coordinator), Officer Kirby-Pinto (Verona Police Department), Rachel Klansky (Community Representative), Kimberly Manis (Chair - Community Representative), Verena Mikhael (Community Representative), Carol Lynn Moy (VHS/HBW Representative), Staci Puleo (Secretary - Brookdale Representative), Tim Schmidt (Forest Representative), Regina Tully (FN Brown Representative). Kristen Niemczyk-Kistner, Ph.D. (Success Street) attended as a member of the public and VMAC service provider.

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.

Motions were accepted for the **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** from the January 28, 2025 Regular Meeting and the March 31, 2025 Special Meeting. Verena Mikhael abstained from voting as she was not in attendance at either meeting. Diane DiGiuseppe, Timothy Schmidt, and Staci Puleo abstained from voting regarding the March 31, 2025 minutes as they were also not in attendance at that meeting. All others voted in favor of accepting the minutes as circulated.

FINANCIAL & PROGRAM REVIEW

Ann Jocelyn provided an overview of the grant expenditures and program activities to date with a reminder of FY25 grant total funding \$21,151.58: \$16,921.26 GCSUD and \$4,230.32 Township.

Cumulative FY25 spending: \$10,882.56= \$10,177.62 GCSUD, \$704.94 cash match. \$15,422.51 in-kind donations of time and services, which, as usual, far exceeds the required amount.

3Q25 expenditures: \$6,042.47: \$542.47 HBW Peer Leadership activity supplies (self-esteem activity and welcome to incoming students), \$5,000 for Heroes & Cool Kids training and program supplies, \$500 for parent webinar (positive discipline). Recorded \$5,457.84 in-kind donation: (volunteer time, room use related to restaurants supporting Family Night, supplies for family night).

The balance of the grant has been encumbered or is projected to be spent during the 4th quarter.

Program Highlights

BABES (Beginning Awareness Basic Education) - program using puppets to address important and sometimes difficult topics for all VPS 2nd graders was enthusiastically received once again by administration, teachers, students, and families.

HBW Peer Leadership – Self-esteem activity in February. The Peers focus this spring is on orientation welcome activities during 4th grader visits as the 4th graders prepare to transition to middle school.

Heroes & Cool Kids – Heroes completed training sessions and the last visit to the Cool Kids at HBW is scheduled for May 1. Lessons include peer pressure, ATOD use and abuse, and anti-bullying. Younger members of the program will also focus on the orientation and welcome activities for 8th graders as they prepare to transition to high school.

Success Street -February & March webinars for parents on Positive Discipline and Teen Self-Esteem were well attended and informative, educator session on positive behavior in the classroom to be scheduled with VPS.

Family Night – Mar 13th: 15 restaurants offered discounts to encourage families to dine together. The next Family nights are scheduled for October 9, 2025 and March 12, 2026.

Herren Speaking Engagement Township & VPS program with content and promotional support from VMAC on April 3, 2025 for students and community presentations. Funding from

the Township Opioid Settlement grants. VPS conducted a reflection exercise immediately following the session, students reached out directly to Mr. Herren, crisis cards provided by the Township for all students, evening attendees, police officers, library, recreation, etc.

AwareAwakeAlive – working with VHS and VPD to coordinate the alcohol poisoning and overdose warning program ahead of spring activities & parties

DEA Take Back April 26th, working with VPD to coordinate announcements on social media and via lawn signs, scheduling bi-annual senior visit. Limitations due to police department relocation and limited public access to dropbox discussed.

Art & Meditation – registration has been strong and response has been positive for this new program conducted in conjunction with VPL for teens & adult.

Wellness Fair – Sunday, June 29: ideas for VMAC table were discussed

FISCAL YEAR 2026 Overview

Letter of Intent received from GCSUD offering \$18,100 grant

Plan Approved by Committee 3/31/25 based on FY25 programs and plan, with \$13,575 of in-kind donations

Resolution from Council on 4/7/25 to accept grant and fund cash match of \$4,525

Capacity Assessment completed with all categories rated a 4 or 5 out of 5. No further action is required but we always strive to improve and maintain capacity and communication.

Discussion included outreach topic ideas for 2025-2026 and collaboration with the Board of Education and Verona schools.

ANNUAL MEETING

As outlined in the by-laws for VMAC, during the meeting in January and again in the notice of this meeting, it was announced that the officer positions Chair, Vice-Chair (optional), and Secretary would be appointed or reappointed at this meeting. The Grant Coordinator appointed by the Township Council, serves as Treasure for VMAC.

Kim Manis indicated that she would like to stay on as Chair. Being that no one else expressed interest in the position of Chair, Secretary Puleo called for a vote to approve the reappointment of Kimberly Manis as Chair. The members in attendance voted unanimously to approve the reappointment of Kimberly Manis as Chair of VMAC.

Being that no one expressed interest in serving as Vice-Chair on the Committee, an optional officer position, Secretary Puleo called for a vote to approve that VMAC will not fill the position of Vice-Chair at this time. The members in attendance voted unanimously to approve to continuing without a Vice-Chair of VMAC.

Staci Puleo has indicated that she will be stepping down as Secretary of VMAC, while staying on as a Committee member representing Brookdale Elementary. To date no one has expressed interest in this position. Being no expressed interest, Secretary Puleo called for a vote to allow the Chair and Coordinator to cover this position for FY26 until such time as a member offers to fill this role. The members in attendance voted unanimously to approve the temporary appointment of Ann Jocelyn and Kimberly Manis as co-Secretaries. Members were encouraged to contact Ann Jocelyn if they would like more information on this position.

Kim Manis asked if any members anticipate leaving their membership roles at the end of the fiscal year 2025 (June 30, 2025). Carol Lyn Moy will be staying on the Committee as a representative of VHS, but will no longer have a student at HBW. As other members of the current Committee have students at HBW, and Ms. Moy is a member of their staff, we will not seek another representative from the Middle School at this time.

Members are appointed to a three-year term. While members are encouraged to stay for the full-term, we recognize that conflicts do arise. Please note that the Council has extended the expiration of terms to December 31st due to the revised election schedule.

Proposal to move quarterly meetings to the previous schedule of the third Wednesday of the month following quarter end in order to avoid conflict with Board of Education meetings on Tuesdays and other Township of Verona committee meetings was discussed. It was recognized that in a vibrant community like Verona, it is difficult to avoid conflicts entirely, but measures would be taken to reach out to various stakeholders to minimize scheduling conflicts whenever possible.

Proposed Meeting dates are Wednesdays - July 16, October 15, January 21, April 15. All meetings will continue to be held via zoom call.

Members of the Committee agreed that all efforts should be made to avoid conflicts and that scheduling should be selected to best fit that desire and that zoom call continues to be the preferred format for meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Chairwoman Manis called for public comment. Kristen Niemczyk-Kistner, Ph.D. (Success Street) expressed appreciation for the partnership with VMAC and the outreach to members of the community. She is excited about the prospect of creating a customized program for VMAC on the topic of managing acceptance and rejection.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Holland, Jocelyn, Klansky, Manis, Mikhael, Moy, Puleo, Schmidt

NAYS:

ABSENT: Cuartas, DiGiuseppe, O'Sullivan, Tully

ABSTAIN: Boyle, Day

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Jocelyn", followed by a vertical yellow line.

Ann Jocelyn, Coordinator
October 15, 2025