



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
ONE ROOSEVELT SQUARE  
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JAMES RAUSSE, FAICP, WEDG  
COMMISSIONER

February 3, 2026

VIA EMAIL:

Honorable City Council Members  
City of Mount Vernon  
1 Roosevelt Square  
Mount Vernon, New York 10550

RE: Request for the City Council to Enact Legislation Authorizing the Mayor to Execute a Professional Services Agreement with ARUP for Phase II of the NYSERDA Project. For consideration on the agenda for the February 11, 2026, City Council meeting.

Honorable City Council President Thompson and Council Members:

I am writing to respectfully request that the City Council enact legislation authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Professional Services Agreement with ARUP, an international environmental and engineering consulting firm, to support the City of Mount Vernon's participation in Phase II of a New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)-funded project.

As the City Council may recall, the City previously authorized the Mayor to execute a Letter of Commitment with ARUP in support of its Phase I submission to NYSERDA. ARUP has since been selected by NYSERDA to advance this initiative to Phase II, which focuses on implementation-oriented planning and policy integration. Execution of a formal Professional Services Agreement is now required to define roles, responsibilities, and deliverables and to allow the City to fully participate in the next phase of work.

Phase II will focus on advancing actionable, data-driven strategies to integrate climate resilience and urban heat mitigation into Mount Vernon's land use and regulatory framework. ARUP will work collaboratively with the Department of Planning and Community Development to refine and apply urban heat and environmental data, evaluate zoning and development standards through a climate lens, and develop clear, implementable tools that can be incorporated into the City's zoning ordinance update. The project is structured around specific, measurable outcomes, including producing policy-ready analyses, identifying zoning mechanisms that support heat-resilient development, and aligning climate mitigation strategies with the City's ongoing zoning modernization efforts.

Participation in Phase II will provide Mount Vernon with advanced technical expertise, planning tools, and policy guidance that directly support the City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance update, while strengthening climate resilience, public health protections, and environmental equity. Key benefits of the City's participation include enhanced decision-making capacity for zoning and development review, improved integration of climate considerations into local law, and the opportunity to serve as a model for other municipalities undertaking similar efforts statewide.

Importantly, the proposed Professional Services Agreement does not require any direct cash expenditure by the City. The City's financial responsibility will be satisfied through an in-kind contribution of Department of





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Planning and Community Development staff time, which will be accounted for through work already underway on the zoning ordinance update. The value of this in-kind contribution is estimated at \$74,700 and will be credited toward the overall project budget submitted by ARUP to NYSERDA.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the City Council adopt legislation authorizing the Mayor to execute the Professional Services Agreement with ARUP for Phase II of the NYSERDA project. We appreciate your consideration and remain available to provide any additional information or respond to questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Rausse".

JAMES RAUSSE, FAICP, WEDG

cc: Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard  
Comptroller Darren M. Morton  
Malcolm Clark, Chief of Staff

